

**Cultural Traditions of Sixteenth-Century English Books of Secrets**

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## **Abstract**

Unlock nature's secrets and gain control over your world. That was the promise made by books of secrets, which were popularized in sixteenth-century England because of an increase in literacy rates and cheap printing techniques. Even with the large amounts of printed books, manuscript versions were still produced in larger numbers well into the seventeenth century. Many differences existed between the printed and manuscript versions. Manuscript books of secrets made use of more common animals in its magic, and had different goals. Printed books, on the other hand, maintained a more academic feel, referring to mystical or strange animals.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the sixteenth century, books of secrets flourished in popular culture propelled by the printing press and a rising literacy rate. These books varied in subject matter, from how to create the Philosopher's stone to common household recipes that invoked the occult properties of plants, animals, and the influence of the heavens. Many of these printed books were spuriously attributed to famous natural philosophers like Aristotle, Albertus Magnus, and Roger Bacon. The popularization of secrets changed the social and cultural world in which they were transmitted.

Before the advent of printing, 'secrets' were wrapped in the myth that they could only be entrusted to elite, educated, male members of society.<sup>1</sup> The spread of printing throughout Europe changed the views on who could gain access to 'secret' knowledge. Printers began to sell cheap books of secrets, written in the vernacular, which provided a growing literate population access to this knowledge, previously carefully controlled by guilds and intellectuals. At least, this was how the material was presented. Along with these trade-related recipes or experiments and philosophical or magical processes, books of secrets provided readers with more common recipes and other practical household information.

The genre of books of secrets dates back to the Hellenistic period and was popularized in the later middle ages. William Eamon, in *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, defines books of secrets as "compilations of recipes, formulas, and 'experiments' of various kinds, including everything from medical prescriptions and technical formulas to magical procedures, cooking recipes, parlour tricks, and practical jokes .... [with] the promise of providing access to the

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<sup>1</sup> William Eamon, *Science and Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 40-45.

'secrets of nature and art.'"<sup>2</sup> In the middle ages, these books were often attributed to various renowned ancient and medieval natural philosophers. One of the most popular books of the later middle ages was *Secretum secretorum*, attributed to Aristotle, which survives in hundreds of manuscripts. While some books in the sixteenth century refer to themselves as books of secrets and some authors are called professors of secrets, the genre “books of secrets” is a modern one. The scribes or authors of precisely the same sorts of collections frequently do not identify them as belonging to any genre despite the fact that they contain the same sorts of materials. Depending on their particular preoccupations, the same sorts of books are sometimes referred to as books of experiments or recipes. The term recipe refers simply to a set of instructions beginning with the Latin work *recipe*, meaning take something. It involves instructions on combining these ingredients. Experiments are similarly sets of instructions to accomplish some kind of task (chemical, medical, magical, etc.) that do not focus so explicitly around a list of ingredients. Nonetheless, these forms are all unified by their largely practical focus, their short format, and their focus on employing occult forces found in nature. Since a significant number of sixteenth-century authors of books of secrets use the terms secrets to refer to all of them, I follow William Eamon in employing it as a general descriptor. I also occasionally use the terms experiments or recipes when a more focussed descriptor is useful.

While the printing press gave more people access to books of secrets, the process of popularization was already underway before its invention.<sup>3</sup> Some of the more popular books of secrets, like the *Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus*, circulated throughout Europe in various

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 546.

vernacular languages long they were printed.<sup>4</sup> After the invention and spread of the printing press, both manuscript and printed books of secrets were produced in Latin and the vernacular languages of Europe. Manuscripts continued to be produced well into the seventeenth century, demonstrating the popularity of the texts but also the continuing importance of manuscript transmission.<sup>5</sup>

Vernacular manuscript books of secrets were not just copies of popular printed books. Scribe's collected together recipes and experiments for their own personal needs, making them idiosyncratic and personal productions.<sup>6</sup> While these collections did draw upon printed books for some material and had a similar format of short easy-to-use recipes, they also had different goals and drew upon a variety of magic traditions. Recipes for love, getting people to dance naked, and thief detection betray some of the desires of the scribes or the difficulties they might have faced. The private nature of manuscripts allowed these scribes explore answers to these desires which ran counter to social norms and were often illegal. The idiosyncratic and unfiltered nature of these collections illustrate that early modern manuscript books of secrets represent a qualitatively different stream of transmission of knowledge. This stream was, in part, passed through male networks of people interested in the ritual magic of the clerical underworld.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Mellyn, "Passing On Secrets: Interactions between Latin and Vernacular Medicine in Medieval Europe" *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 16.1/2 (2013), 294-5.

<sup>5</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Majorie Swann, *Curiosities and Texts: The Culture of Collecting in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 154.

<sup>7</sup> For more on the clerical underworld see Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Frank Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic: Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013); Frank Klaassen, "Learning and Masculinity in Manuscripts of Ritual Magic of the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance" *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 38.1 (2007), 49-76.



The two traditions, print and manuscript, have a common root in medieval books of secrets and share many features, although they also developed some differences in the sixteenth century. This can be seen in the ways in which they constructed authority. Medieval compilers did so by relying heavily on the purported writings of famous ancient and medieval natural philosophers, or claiming to do so. Furthermore, medieval compilers often included statements of *probatum est* at the end of recipes. These statements should not be taken as a sign of any modern-style scientific experiment, but rather, Scholastic writers used them to show that something had been observed rather than proved by logical argument.<sup>8</sup> Scribes of sixteenth-century manuscript and printed books of secrets also used these approaches, but authors of printed works additionally portrayed themselves as nobles or that their books had been endorsed by noblemen. This connection to nobility added authority to their books, as it drew upon the cultural construction of the nobleman as a purveyor of truth.<sup>9</sup>

Both print and manuscript books of secrets also helped readers to address social expectations often in a highly gendered way. Allison Kavey, for example, has demonstrated how printed books constructed gender.<sup>10</sup> Printed books contained secrets that helped both men and women live up to social norms and the ideal for their gender. They provided readers with recipes that gave them a sense of control over their lives. Manuscripts are a crucial and often overlooked source for such avenues of inquiry. Similar to the print tradition, recipes in manuscripts dealt addressed social norms of caring and providing for one's family and community. The scribes, however, also addressed the desires of a youthful masculinity.

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<sup>8</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 55-6.

<sup>9</sup> While the social construction of the nobleman as the gentlemen-philosopher is seen as seventeenth-century construction, it appears that early forms of it were being used in sixteenth-century books of secrets. For more on the gentlemen-philosopher and truth see Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> Kavey, chapters 4 and 5.

## Historiography

The study of medieval secrets literature and the wider literature of magic, alchemy, natural wonders, and astrology, began with Lynn Thorndike and Francis Yates' explorations of genres and practices that were not commonly associated with science. Thorndike's eight volume work, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, traces the various historical figures and texts that influenced magic and science from the Roman era to the seventeenth century.<sup>11</sup> In discussing both the actual and pseudepigraphal works of Albertus Magnus, Thorndike argues that these works evince a gradual shift away from trust in authorities to experiment and observation as the criterion for truth.<sup>12</sup> The Yates' thesis also provided a new avenue for discussing the history of science. Francis Yates argued that "hermeticism" had a significant, or even crucial, influence on the scientific revolution. She focused her argument on Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) and how "[his] use of Copernicanism shows most strikingly how shifting and uncertain were the borders between genuine science and Hermeticism in the Renaissance."<sup>13</sup> Although historians, notably Robert Westman, have convincingly challenged Yates' thesis, it, nevertheless, drew scholarly interest to the study of magic and lent it some legitimacy.<sup>14</sup> Both historians, Lynn Thorndike and Francis Yates, laid the groundwork for the discussions of magic and "secrets" of nature.

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<sup>11</sup> Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1923-1958).

<sup>12</sup> Thorndike, vol. II, 544, 732.

<sup>13</sup> Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1964), 155.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Westman, "Magical Reform and Astronomical Reform: The Yates Thesis Reconsidered" in Robert Westman and J.E. McGuire, *Hermeticism and the Scientific Revolution* (Los Angeles: Williams Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1977).

William Eamon's book, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, is the foundational work for the study of books of secrets. Eamon briefly traces the history of secrets of nature from the classical period to the early modern period. He describes how secrets came into the medieval west from the Middle East and were lumped together with magic and other technical arts rather than the formal science of academics. This connection with the technical arts was developed further when the secrets passed into print. In the early modern period, scientific and magical secrets went from being private to public knowledge and, by combining material from diverse sources, constituted a *bricolage* of elite and popular perspectives on nature. In this process, "secrets" became code for technique or recipe. Finally, in the early modern literature written by "professors of secrets", a proto-Baconian empiricism developed in their efforts to give people technical recipes gathered from a variety of sources, sometimes their own laboratories. Eamon's work on tracing the culture of "secrets" through the middle ages and into the seventeenth century provides a broad outline of the tradition for future work on books of secrets. His work on the Italian "professors of secrets" and the impact that they had on the culture of secrets in the sixteenth century is particularly valuable in this study because it provides a point of comparison for discussing the culture of secrets in other European countries.

Eamon deals primarily with printed books of secrets within the scientific culture of Italy and Germany during the early modern period which he takes to be definitive.<sup>15</sup> However, there are several problems with this. His view of English books of secrets, however, does not take into account the significant editing of the imported continental sources by English writers and printers as they prepared this material for publication. More crucially, Eamon does not differentiate between manuscripts and printed books of secrets in the sixteenth century, but rather

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<sup>15</sup> He briefly argues that English perspectives on 'secrets' were the same as those found in Italy and Germany because many of the more popular books were imported.

focuses on printed sources. In reality, a significant tradition of manuscript copy persisted through the early modern period, and these manuscripts have significant differences from the printed works. For example, they have few, if any, technical recipes that are found in the printed works, and the manuscripts often contain a higher percentage of experiments that went against social norms. Finally, Eamon does not differentiate between the cultures of science in various national contexts. Recent studies have emphasized the distinctiveness of the English scientific world, much of which took place in informal networks, largely in manuscript form, and never found its way into print.<sup>16</sup> This makes crucial a re-examination of English books of secrets, the manner of their preparation for English presses, and how they were treated in the active manuscript culture of the sixteenth century.

Laura Mitchell's Ph.D. dissertation, *Cultural Uses of Magic in Fifteenth-Century England*, seeks to describe the English context of manuscripts, and specifically, manuscripts of magic.<sup>17</sup> Mitchell shows that there was a lively vernacular manuscript culture in fifteenth-century England. She argues that magic was interwoven into everyday life in the middle ages and how magic was used in manuscript collections to construct private and public identities. Natural magic and charms were used to show off one's learning and for practical medical purposes. Mitchell's study highlights the importance of looking at manuscript culture, something that by no means ended with the birth of printing.

In *Books of Secrets: Natural Philosophy In England, 1550-1600*, Allison Kavey partially fills in these gaps in Eamon's work by focusing on the English context. She argues that inexpensive volumes, such as *The Books of Secrets of Albertus Magnus* and *Treasurie of*

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<sup>16</sup> Deborah Harkness, *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Eric Ash, *Power, Knowledge, and Expertise in Elizabethan England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Laura Mitchell, "Cultural Uses of Magic in Fifteenth-Century England" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2011).

*Commodious Conceits*, presented readers with a systematic view of the natural world that could be manipulated for personal ends.<sup>18</sup> Kavey argues that books of secrets constructed three different levels of authority: the authors, compilers, and the readers. By assigning authorship to various famous natural philosophers of the past, printers borrowed the authority already attributed to these authors by the general public, rather than establishing it anew. Secondly, compilers of printed books of secrets, such as the *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*, present themselves as authorities, citing their observations and experience with the natural world. Finally, readers were themselves granted authority as many of the books outlined the characteristics of a good reader. Readers should judge the knowledge presented to them against their own experiences. Although Kavey's analysis makes a valuable contribution to the analysis of English books of secrets, she follows Eamon in focusing on printed works and fails to take into account manuscript books of secrets. The collections of manuscript books of secrets constructed authority in different ways without the introductory letters found in printed works, scribes constructed their authority explicitly in the language of their recipes and implicitly through the collection of recipes in manuscripts. The significant number of authors of manuscript books of secrets make the study of manuscripts a useful endeavor for understanding the culture of secrets.

Kavey adds another layer to the discussion of the culture of secrets by looking at the role of gender in the creation and reading of books of secrets. Her argument focuses on the ways in which certain books of secrets presented the natural world as controllable through the use of short, easy-to-use recipes.<sup>19</sup> These books helped to shape femininity within the domestic space

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<sup>18</sup> Allison Kavey, *Books of Secrets: Natural Philosophy in England, 1550-1600*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Kavey, 86.

of the kitchen and elite masculinity with the breeding and racing of horses.<sup>20</sup> Kavey argues that books that specifically focused on women continued in the oral tradition of housewifery and cookery.<sup>21</sup> The authors and printers of these texts (all men) sought to avoid the controversy of publishing a book of secrets for women by only including recipes that fit within accepted feminine spaces.<sup>22</sup> Kavey's argument on secrets and masculinity focuses on a single book, Gervase Markham's *How to chuse, ride, traine, and diet, both Hunting-horses and running Horses*, and a narrow part of elite masculinity, that of raising, breeding, and racing horses. She argues that Markham's book not only gave gentlemen a way of producing superior horses, but also developed and promoted the idea that gentlemen needed to be perfect horsemen.<sup>23</sup>

Manuscript books of secrets differed from printed books. Unlike printed books, and unlike the developing recipe literature common in the seventeenth century, manuscript secrets were not commonly ascribed to a specific natural philosopher, although some scribes did copy from books that were attributed to natural philosophers. Manuscripts also tended to include a more eclectic mix of various types of magic than printed books, mixing natural magic with necromantic and ritual magic. Manuscripts, in the early modern period, blended genres of magic that had previously been separated.<sup>24</sup> More specifically, the inclusion of these different genres of magic represents a shift in how people understood secrets and conceptualized the natural world and expanded the format of secrets to include longer, more complex rituals.<sup>25</sup> In addition to including those more dubious forms of magic, the manuscript tradition focused on practical,

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<sup>20</sup> see Kavey, chapter 4 "Secrets Gendered: Femininity and Feminine Knowledge in Books of Secrets", chapter 5 "Secrets Bridled, Gentlemen Trained".

<sup>21</sup> Kavey, 100.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 124-5.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, 142-3

<sup>24</sup> See Klaassen, *Transformations of Magic*.

<sup>25</sup> Although, the rituals found in books of secrets are shorter and less complex than those found in works dedicated almost exclusively to ritual magic.

easily obtained ingredients, compared to some printed books that required expensive ingredients or body parts from mythical or exotic creatures. The two traditions, also, tended to have different goals. Recipes to produce erotic desires in women and achieve success at gambling are more common in manuscripts, and household necessities and illusionist tricks appear more often in printed sources. These differences show the importance of studying manuscript books of secrets, not only to get a complete picture of the culture of secrets but also to understand the shifting views of secrets, as various secrets were added to or edited from the two traditions of books of secrets.

I will argue that manuscript and printed books of secrets are two distinct traditions within the genre. Supplementing the work of Eamon and Kavey, I will set out to show the distinctiveness of how the compilers of English printed books of secrets constructed their authority in comparison with Continental sources.<sup>26</sup> Eamon portrays the pursuit of "secrets" of nature in the seventeenth century as a hunt.<sup>27</sup> This metaphor is useful for highlighting the differences between Continental and English compilers in the sixteenth century, English compilers hunted through both old and new texts for secrets, whereas in the Continental context (especially in Italy), authors presented the hunt taking place in the laboratory.<sup>28</sup> Also, I will examine what made up a printed book of secrets, looking at the recipes and experiments that were included by compilers and what was edited out. Then I will turn to manuscript books of secrets. I will examine how scribes' constructed authority in books of secrets and the various genres that were mixed together in manuscript books of secrets, using the works of Klaassen,

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<sup>26</sup> Eamon, *Science*; Kavey, *Books of Secrets*.

<sup>27</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 269-70.

<sup>28</sup> For most of the Italian "professors of secrets" this was a rhetorical construct. Eamon identifies only a couple of writers, Giambattista Della Porta and Isabella Cortese, who might have been conducting experiments and publishing their findings. Eamon, *Science*, 137.

Mitchell, and Davies to help develop this discussion.<sup>29</sup> In particular, the scribes' blending of different genres of magic will serve as a key point of comparison between the manuscript and print traditions. Lastly, building on Kavey's work on gender in books of secrets, I will examine the goals of various recipes found in books of secrets. The study of gender in books of secrets reveals another area in which manuscripts differed from printed works, and is crucial for getting a full picture of the culture of secrets. Manuscripts were not edited for popular consumption like printed books and provided scribes with a greater scope for the expression of masculine concerns and fantasy. While both the print and manuscript traditions answered to gendered anxieties, printed books tended to work within conventional and socially acceptable bounds, while manuscripts combined conventional patriarchal ideals with youthful or transgressive masculinity.

Two printed books form the principal material for my argument: John Partridge's *The treasurie of commodious conceits, and hidden secrets* and Thomas Lupton's *A thousand notable things of sundrie sorts*. Both these books were popular and important 'home-grown' English books of secrets. Partridge's book went through five printed editions in the sixteenth century, with two different printers. The 1591 edition *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits* contains more recipes than the previous four editions, including some that are magical. As it represents the fullest compilation of material, I will focus on this edition, and will use the others as points of comparison. Lupton's book went through three editions printed by two different printers, and I will be focusing primarily on the 1595 edition.<sup>30</sup> In the later half of the sixteenth century, the works of Alessio Piemontese, Fiorvanti, and Della Porta were translated into several European

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<sup>29</sup> Klaassen, *Transformations*; Mitchell, "Cultural Uses"; Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> All three editions of *A Thousand Notable Things* contain the same material, although the 1590 edition is missing the index that is printed at the end of the other two.



languages, including English.<sup>31</sup> As these books of secrets provided the framework and material for many of the English works, I will also be looking at two other printed books that were popular throughout Europe and translated into English in the sixteenth century: *The booke of secretes of Albertus Magnus of the vertues of herbes, stones, and certayne beasts* and *The secretes of the reverende Maister Alexis of Piemount*.<sup>32</sup> These two books will serve as a kind of control group to highlight the distinctive features of the British context. These two books also provided some of the source material for Partridge and Lupton's books that will allow me to examine the selection process in which they engaged.<sup>33</sup>

My study of manuscripts will not be based on an exhaustive survey, but rather will focus on two sixteenth-century manuscripts: London, British Library, Sloane 3850 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1378.<sup>34</sup> Manuscript notebooks are idiosyncratic, their compilation dictated by each scribe's personal interest and the material that they had access to. As such, they vary a lot more than printed works. These two manuscripts, in particular, are valuable examples of the distinctiveness of the manuscript tradition. As well, the two manuscripts represent two different types of collections found in the sixteenth century. Both are mostly written in English,

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<sup>31</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 250-2

<sup>32</sup> I have employed the 1562 edition of *The Secrets of Alexis of Piedmont* because it is the earliest complete printed edition in English. I will be using the 1560 printed edition of *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus*, as it is the earliest English printed edition.

<sup>33</sup> My decision to look at these four books was further influenced by both Kavey and Eamon's works. Eamon discusses both *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus* and *The Secrets of Alexis of Piedmont* at length and briefly mentions Lupton's work in his discussion on English books of secrets. Kavey uses both Partridge's and Lupton's books as primary sources in her work.

<sup>34</sup> In regards to the date of Ashmole 1378, "This MS. is in an old hand, apparently earlier than the time of Q. Elizabeth." William Henry Black, *A descriptive, analytical, and critical catalogue of the manuscripts bequeathed unto the University of Oxford by Elias Ashmole, Esq., MD, FRS, Windsor Herald, also of some additional MSS. contributed by Kingsley, Lhuyd, Borlase, and others* (Oxford, 1845), 1063. As for the date of Sloane 3850, ff.143-66, Frank Klaassen and Katerina Bens have dated the script as a "late sixteenth or early seventeenth century" secretary hand. Frank Klaassen and Katrina Bens, "Achieving Invisibility and Having Sex with Spirits: Six Operations from an English Magic Collection ca. 1600," *Opuscula* 3.1 (2013), 9.

with some Latin. Ashmole 1378 consists largely of medicinal recipes, although the last several folios are filled with various charms, rituals, and potions for love and detecting thieves. The book of secrets in Sloane 3850 takes up twenty-three folios of the manuscript, which the scribe titled *Of Love, Kardes, Dice and Tables and other Consaytes*. As the title suggests, this book of secrets consists of various recipes and experiments for love and guaranteed success in gambling. Examining both printed and manuscript books of secrets together provides a more nuanced picture of secrets in sixteenth-century England.

Chapter one will focus on printed books, beginning with a description of the four printed books of secrets in this study. I will look at what types of secrets can be found in printed books, and how the different types of knowledge traditions were presented. Then, I will look at how English compilers constructed authority, comparing them to their continental counterparts, drawing upon Eamon's work on the construction of authority in continental books of secrets. I will also situate English books of secrets within the changing culture of science in sixteenth-century England.

My second chapter will look at the manuscript books of secrets: Ashmole 1378 and Sloane 3850 ff. 143-166. First, I will situate these manuscripts within the culture of books of secrets in sixteenth-century England. By examining how these manuscripts compare with the printed books, I will discuss how the scribes of these two manuscripts developed their authority. Furthermore, a comparison of the different types of knowledge and magic that appear in these manuscripts, as opposed to the print tradition, will show that manuscript books of secrets were a unique tradition in sixteenth-century England.

Lastly, in my third chapter, I will further extend the argument that print and manuscript books of secrets represented two distinct traditions by looking at the use of the recipes found in

books of secrets.<sup>35</sup> I will focus mostly on the construction of masculinity found in books of secrets. This serves as one way to look at how manuscripts reveal a part of the culture of secrets not found in printed books. I will analyze how scribes or compilers shaped the construction of gender in their works, and how the works offered men the hope of achieving their gendered ideals, something that differed in printed and manuscript contexts.

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<sup>35</sup> By tradition, I mean that print and manuscript books of secrets each had distinct ways of constructing authority and use of magic throughout the sixteenth century that have in the medieval tradition.

## CHAPTER ONE PRINTED BOOKS

The year 1555 marked a shift in English books of secrets and the selling of secrets.<sup>36</sup>

What had previously been represented as too valuable, even too dangerous, to be put in the hands of any but the elite and educated was now made available in print to a wider reading public. With this came a change in rhetoric. Authors now claimed it was their moral duty to publish secrets of nature, that is short recipes, or experiments, using plants, animals, and stones, so that all could make use of them. While books of secrets provided recipes for a variety of purposes, they usually focused on medicine, various trade crafts, and miraculous properties of the natural world. Although similar in form to recipes books, books of secrets connected these things with occult properties and virtues of natural objects. Authors pointed to connections between the occult properties found in objects in nature and the planets that governed them. Astrology might also determine the most propitious time for an operation such as when certain herbs should be gathered so that they would be more powerful. But these occult properties could only be discovered through experience and rather than reason alone, differentiating them from the Aristotelian science of the universities.

Compilers of books of secrets in sixteenth-century England differed from the Continental authors. In Italy, these authors presented themselves as rich gentlemen who sought out secrets and experimented with them. Alexis of Piedmont and his peers emphasized personal experience over the writings of ancient and medieval authors when constructing their authority.<sup>37</sup> English authors borrowed the Italian rhetorical motif of revealing secrets as a moral duty. However, they did not present themselves as experimenters of secrets or noblemen, but rather as what Eric Ash

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<sup>36</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 134.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 161.

has called expert mediators.<sup>38</sup> Like other expert mediators, they did not need to be experimenters to be seen as authoritative. As compilers, they had authority because they, allegedly, had the expertise to sort between secrets that were true and those that were false. They collected material from wise and reliable sources and then, claiming significant utilitarian value for these offerings, passed on their expertise, not to wealthy patrons, but to men and women of varying socio-economic status.

### **English books of secrets, their content, and structure**

Books of secrets often took the form of a collection of short recipes that dealt with a variety of material from medicine to trade secrets. They focused on utility and had a common rhetoric or mythology. Although, the content and mythology shifted slightly over time. Compilers claimed their operations employed occult properties which derived from the stars, that is, the secrets of nature. This together with the attribution of these things to famous natural philosophers distinguishes them from modern recipe books.<sup>39</sup>

In the middle ages, books of secrets made up a significant portion of the literature of naturalia. Intellectuals were drawn to this genre because of the practical recipes that promised greater control over one's social life. These books, however, fell outside the university curriculum, since they dealt with occult properties that could only be discovered by personal experience and experimentation. While Scholastics recognized the value of experience, they founded their natural philosophy principally on the logical articulation of established authorities.<sup>40</sup> The genre developed out of a long tradition of writings of ancient natural philosophers, and Roman encyclopaedias. Pliny's *Natural History* was a common source for

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<sup>38</sup> Ash, *Power and Knowledge*, 8-10.

<sup>39</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 16.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 45.

medieval books of secrets, not only for the material covering the natural world but also for information on the mechanical arts.<sup>41</sup> While Pliny's work was not originally intended as a book of secrets, medieval writers thought of it that way and repurposed it, using it as a source for their own books.<sup>42</sup>

*Secreta Alberti* (also referred to as *Experimenta Alberti* and *Liber aggregationis* in the middle ages) was, arguably, the most famous medieval book of experiments, and thus serves as a good starting point for examining the content and structure of books of secrets.<sup>43</sup> Originally, it was compiled in either the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century by someone who had an interest in Arabic occult sciences. It survives in numerous manuscripts dated to the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries. No uniform version existed as the manuscripts differ in their ordering of the material and some only included the full text. Some manuscripts, however, seem to be direct copies of others.<sup>44</sup> *Secreti Alberti* draws on a variety of sources including Pliny's *Natural History*, *Secretum secretorum*, Albert's *De mineralibus*.<sup>45</sup> In the introductory letter, the compiler specifically identified as sources Kyranides and the *Book of Alcorath*, typically attributed to Hermes.<sup>46</sup> A Latin version, under the title *Liber aggregationis*, first appeared in print in England

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<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, 26; William Eamon, "Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Science" *Sudhoff's Archiv*. 69.1 (1985), 28.

<sup>42</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 24-27.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 71. While *Secretum Secretorum* is extant in more copies than *Albertus Magnus* and as such seems to have enjoyed a greater popularity, it is written as a letter from Aristotle to Alexander the Great. As such, it is not as useful as a comparison with other printed sixteenth-century books of secrets examined in this thesis, all of which are written as a collection of recipes. Furthermore, the manuscripts to be examined later all are written in recipe form and as such *Albertus Magnus* serves as a better source for arguing that manuscripts can be books of secrets.

<sup>44</sup> Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, 722; Thorndike identifies 16 manuscripts of *Experimenta Alberti* in British libraries and another 7 in continental libraries.

<sup>45</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 71.

<sup>46</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 71; *Kirandes* was translated into Latin in the twelfth century. Although it deals with animals in its second, third, and fourth book there seems to be no connection between it and *Secreta Alberti*. *Kirandes* focused on the medicinal virtue of animals, whereas in *Secreta*,

in 1483. It became the first printed book of secrets to be translated into English in 1560 and went through another three editions in the sixteenth century (1565, 1570, and 1599), each by a different printer.<sup>47</sup> *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus* is broken down into five books: "On the Virtue of Herbs", "On the Virtue of Stones", "On the Virtue of Beasts", an astrological treatise on the hours in which each of the planets have dominion, and "Marvels of the World".

The first three books provide the reader with pithy experiment, detailing some of the occult properties of plants, stones, and beasts. The uses to which these can be put include invisibility, overcoming one's opponents in court, finding particular kinds of information, and to charm people for personal and economic gain. Each book begins with an index of the items to be covered with the names given in both English and Latin. While each book primarily focuses on their respective subject, there is an intermingling of the three categories. An example of this is the description of the herb Centory which includes both the powers of the herb and also other animals and things.

The eleventh herbe is named of the Chaldeis Jliphilon, of the Grekes Orgelon, of the Latines Centaurea, of English men Centory, which sayth that ths herbe hath a marualous vertue, for yf it be ioyned with the bloude of a female lapwyng, or black plouer and and be put with oyle in a lampe, all they that compasse it aboute, shal beleue them selves to be witches, so that oneshal beleue of another, that his head is in heaven and his fete in the earth.<sup>48</sup>

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the focus is on the magical attributes of animals. Lynn Thorndike, "Further Consideration of the Experimenta, Speculum Astronomiae, and De Secretis Mulierum Ascribed to Albertus Magnus" *Speculum* 30.3 (1955), 418; Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science* vol. 2, 229-235; Little is mentioned about the *Book of Alcorath*, other than its typical attribution to Hermes, by either Eamon or Thorndike: Eamon, *Science*, 71; Thorndike, *History*, vol. 2, 220, 727.

<sup>47</sup> Kavey, 10-16.

<sup>48</sup> Albertus Magnus. "The boke of secretes of Albertus Magnus of the vertues of herbes, stones, and certayne beasts: also, a boke of the same author, of the maruaylous thinges of the world, and of certayne effectes caused of certayne beastes." London, 1560. *Early English Books Online*. STC (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)/258.5, A.viii.v.

Pseudo-Albert viewed the elements in these categories of nature as connected to one another through a system of sympathies and antipathies.<sup>49</sup> In the individual entries the author provided the names in Chaldean and Greek, along with the Latin and English, although the Chaldean and Greek names are not actual words and are either fake or corrupted as a result of scribal error.<sup>50</sup> He seems to have included these foreign names to emphasize the exotic nature of this knowledge.<sup>51</sup> Both the book on herbs and the book on beasts are organized by plant or beast, rather than the purpose to which they can be put. The book on stones, however, is organized by purpose, with a title that indicates the goal of the recipe separate from the main body of the text, making it easier to scan for practical use.<sup>52</sup> Much of the book on stones is taken from the Albert's *De minerabilis*, although Pseudo-Albert preferred to discuss the marvelous elements rather than the medicinal ones. Similarly, the books on herbs and beasts reflect a preference for marvels and ludic elements.<sup>53</sup>

In the last section of *Secrets of Albertus*, "Book of Marvels of the World", the compiler provided a more detailed philosophical discussion of the secrets of nature. He provided the reader with a variety of secrets, most of which are attributed to writings of ancient philosophers. "The Book of Marvels" (*De mirabilibus mundi*), often accompanied the *Secreta Alberti* throughout the middle ages, as well as in many printed editions.<sup>54</sup> Pseudo-Albert argued that, despite the philosopher's best efforts, some things cannot be proved by reason alone. The marvellous things "he ought to prove by experience, for the cause of mervallous thinges are

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<sup>49</sup> Kavey, 93.

<sup>50</sup> Frank Brightman and Michael Best, "Introduction" *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus of the Virtues of Herb, Stones and Certain Beasts, also A Book of the Marvels of the World*, ed. Frank Brightman and Michael Best (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), xv-xvi.

<sup>51</sup> Kavey, 80.

<sup>52</sup> Eamon, "Book of Secrets", 34.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 72.



hidde and of so divers causes, goying befor, that mans understanding after Plato, maye not apprehende them.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, he presents to the reader a world that is full of marvellous virtues and things that can only be discovered by experience and not through a process of reasoning.

Pseudo-Albert also focused on astrology, which he argues had an intimate connection with secrets of nature. He stressed that occult properties were natural and derived from the planets, stating at the beginning of the section that "every one of theym taketh theyr vertue from the hygher naturall powers.”<sup>56</sup> He connects the last seven herbs and their medicinal properties, directly with the seven planets: "The thyrd is the herbe of the Moone, which is called Chynoftates. The iuyce of it purgeth the paines of the stomake, & brest plates, the vertue of it declareth that it is the herbe of ye Moon.”<sup>57</sup> In the book on beasts, the connection between astrology and secrets of nature is developed further: "The maner of doying all these before sayd things, that the effect may be good & profitable is that it be doone under a fauourable planet, as Jupiter and Uenus, & thys is in their dayes & houres.”<sup>58</sup> To help the readers know when certain planets have dominion, Pseudo-Albert includes a brief treatise that states the planet that has dominion for every hour of every day of the week.<sup>59</sup> Such connections between astrology and medicine were common throughout the middle ages and sixteenth century, appearing in both academic and popular books.<sup>60</sup>

*A Thousand Notable Things of Sundrie Sorts*, compiled by Thomas Lupton, presents secrets of nature in short easy to use passages. First printed in 1579, it went through two more

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<sup>55</sup> Albertus Magnus, 1560, H.ii.r.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, B.iii.v.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, B.iii.r.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, F.i.r.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, F.i.v - F.viii.v.

<sup>60</sup> Louise Hill Curth, *English Almanacs, Astrology, and Popular Medicine: 1550-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 118.

sixteenth-century editions, in 1590 and 1595.<sup>61</sup> Lupton's book remained in print until the nineteenth century, going through at least another ten editions.<sup>62</sup> Lupton's book contains ten chapters, each with one hundred brief recipes, stories, and various forms of divination. Most of the entries are fairly short, only three to six lines long. The longest entry, describing the history of the bezoar and the acquiring of bezoars from the natives of Peru by the Spanish, is nearly four pages.<sup>63</sup> Throughout *A Thousand Notable Things*, there is very little organization as each book contains a vast variety of assorted and disconnected material.

Like the Pseudo-Albert, Lupton associates secrets of nature with astrology. The reader, however, would have to have some basic knowledge of astrology to understand and employ many of the secrets in it. For example, at one point it suggests "If the Lord of the eighth house, be in the third or ninth house: it signifies, the childe then borne, shall dye among Strangers, or out of his native soyle."<sup>64</sup> Likewise, Lupton provided a method for determining if someone who is sick will die, which he attributes to Haly Abenragel (Ali ibn Abir-Rigal),<sup>65</sup> "Whosoever falles sicke in the hower of Saturne, his infirmitie or disease will be prolonged, (or he will be long sicke) and after will dye: (of the same sickness.)"<sup>66</sup> Lupton makes note of the difficulty of understanding astrology in his introductory letter to the reader, "Not ignorant that there are diuers

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<sup>61</sup> The 1579 edition was printed by John Charlewood for Hughe Spooner. The 1590 edition was printed by Edward White. The 1595 was printed by J. Richards for Edward White.

<sup>62</sup> "Lupton, Thomas (fl. 1572-1584)," G. K. Hunter in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, Oxford: OUP, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17204> (accessed March 30, 2015).

<sup>63</sup> Thomas Lupton, "A thousand notable things of sundrie sorts. Whereof some are wonderfull, some strange, some pleasant, divers necessary, a great sort profitable, and many verie precious." London, 1595. *Early English Books Online*. STC (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)/16958, 184-188.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>65</sup> Ali ibn Abir-Rigal, a mid-eleventh century Arab astrologer, was best known in medieval Europe for *De iudiciis astrorum*. For more on Ali ibn Abir-Rigal see: M. Plessner, "Hermes Trismegistus and Arab Science" *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954), 58; Lynn Thorndike, "The Date of Aegidius de Tebaldis' Translation of Haly Abenragel, 'De Iudiciis Astrologiae'", *The Modern Language Review* 45.4 (Oct. 1950), 517.

<sup>66</sup> Lupton, 145.

and sundry Astrologically Aphorismes, and some other practices besides in this Booke, that manie both wise, learned and eloquent, cannot attaine to the vnderstanding thereof, (much lesse the common sort)."<sup>67</sup> Lupton recommends to his reader that they go to a book, *A brief treatise conteinyng many proper tables &c.*, to get the necessary astrological information.<sup>68</sup> Thus, while Lupton evinces the continuing connection between astrology and books of secrets, the reader would have to go elsewhere to get the information to make use of his secrets in a dedicated way.

Lupton provided many examples of the marvellous wonders that can be found in the world, some of which are playful and others more serious in nature. A representative of the more ludic marvels is found in the ninth book, "If an Egge painted with sundrey colours, and the same set under a Henne which sits to bring forth Chickens: she wil hatch thereof a Chicken, having the like fethers unto the colours painted on the Egge."<sup>69</sup> He began his book with a more serious story, "a rare & strange matter shall appeare, worthy to be marked, especially of such as loues or use Sage."<sup>70</sup> Lupton then relates a story of two lovers who rubbed sage that they found in a garden on their teeth and gums and presently died. Upon investigating the death of the two lovers, a judge discovered a toad underneath the sage "which infected the same Sage with his venomous breath."<sup>71</sup> Lupton ends his story with a way to prevent toads from settling in under one's sage, drawing upon antipathies found in nature, "therefore it is good to plant Rewe round about Sage, for Todes by no meanes will come nie unto Rewe."<sup>72</sup> Brief statements about the marvels of the world, such as those found in Lupton's work, were popular in Elizabethan

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<sup>67</sup> Lupton, "To the Reader", A3r.

<sup>68</sup> Lupton, "To the Reader", A3r. *A brief treatise containing many proper tables* was written by Richard Grafton (d. 1572) and printed in 1573. It seems to have been a popular book, as it went through 9 more editions in the sixteenth century (1576, 1579, 1582, 1585, 1591, 1593, 1595, 1596, 1599).

<sup>69</sup> Lupton, 179.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, 1.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

England.<sup>73</sup> With the use of short narratives, Lupton shows the reader a world that is not only full of marvels but also marvellous things that can be controlled.

*The Secrets of Alexis of Piedmont* (*Secreti del reverendo donno Alessio piemontese*) first printed in Venice in 1555, was the most translated and reprinted book of secrets in sixteenth-century Europe.<sup>74</sup> The 1562 edition of *The Secrets of Alexis of Piedmont* was the only complete sixteenth-century English edition, containing all three parts. Twelve additional editions printed in England in the sixteenth-century only contain one part of *The Secrets of Alexis*, most likely because they would have been cheaper to produce. Both the first and third parts are divided into six books, while the second part is only one book. The first and second parts have a table of contents at the end of their sections, which would have made it easier for readers to use as a reference work.

Each part of *The Secrets of Alexis* deals with some identifiable themes, although this categorization is not absolute. The secrets presented in this text range widely in complexity. Some run to several pages of instructions, require the distilling of a variety of ingredients and take multiple days to complete. Others are as simple as the cure for bite wounds from a venomous beast requiring one to “take grene leaues of a figge tree, & presse the milke of them, thre or fower times into the wounde.”<sup>75</sup> The first book contains medical recipes for a variety of illnesses and ends with sixteen recipes to cure the plague. The rest of the first part deals with secrets from various trades, such as perfuming and metallurgy, and recipes associated with the kitchen (e.g., for various conserves and syrups) and cosmetics (e.g., for make-up, hair dye, and

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<sup>73</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 257.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, 134.

<sup>75</sup> Girolamo Ruscelli, “The secrets of the reverend Maister Alexis of Piemont containing excellent remedies against diverse diseases, wounds, and other accidents, with he maner to make distillations, parfumes, confitures, dyings, colours, fusions, and meltings. A worke well approved, verie necessarie for everie man.” Translated by William Ward. London, 1562. *Early English Books Online*. STC (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)/ 296, 11v.

waters to clean one's face). The second part of *The Secrets* contains an eclectic mix of materials similar to those found in the first part but with two additional types: tricks and veterinary medicine. The inclusion of tricks such as how to make invisible ink reveals the occasionally ludic nature of secrets.<sup>76</sup> Veterinary recipes, by contrast, point to the practical aspects of aspects of books of secrets.<sup>77</sup> Like the first part, the third part is broken down into six books and deals with similar topics. It deals with a variety of household needs, such as medicinal recipes and removing spots from clothes, along with technical secrets dealing mostly with metallurgy.

The inclusion of trade secrets marks the shift that took place in sixteenth-century books of secrets. Books of secrets, such as *The Secrets of Alexis*, mingled theoretical natural philosophy and the empirical experience of craftsmen.<sup>78</sup> For example, one section specifically deals with the “teaching diuers wayes of giltyng, sylueryng, and dying Copper, Iron, and other Metalles.”<sup>79</sup> Readers had to have some knowledge beyond that provided by the book and specialized equipment to make use of some of the experiments. For instance, an experiment to separate gold and silver: “Take *Antimonium*, & put it in a melting Pot, that is with a sharpe pointed bottome, and melte it. Take also the Silver that the Golde is in, and melt it and poure it into the *Antimonium*, the Golde will goe to the bottome, and the Siluer will tarie in the *Antimonium*.”<sup>80</sup> While such recipes may have been used, they also reflect the growing desires of gentlemen to know trade secrets while never intending to actually perform them.

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<sup>76</sup> “To make letters that cannot be read but at the fire: Take salt Armoniack, and make thereof powder very small, and put it in water, than write what you will with it upon Paper, & let it dry. And whan you will read it, hold it before the fire, & you shal read very wel.” *Alexis of Piedmont*, 1<sup>st</sup> part, 14r.

<sup>77</sup> An example of the veterinary medicine: “To make a horse to have a good hoofe: Take Oxe dunge, and temper it with Vinaygre and at nyght laie it whote upon his feete, & wrappe them up in some cloutes, to the intent that the —— — keepe in, whyles it maketh hys operation, and by and by it wyll be a good hoofe.” *Alexis of Piedmont*, 2<sup>nd</sup> part, 79r.

<sup>78</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 105.

<sup>79</sup> *Alexis of Piedmont*, 3<sup>rd</sup> part, 61r.

<sup>80</sup> *Alexis of Piedmont*, 3<sup>rd</sup> part, 65r.

Although Alexis claims that the secrets are for everyone, the expensive and exotic ingredients would have limited those that would have been able to make use of these experiments. The perfume recipes, in particular, would have limited the use of this book to those wealthy enough to afford the ingredients.<sup>81</sup> One cure for a trembling heart involves:

two Dragmes of the best Synamon, halfe a Dragme of Mace, of Hyacinthes, Smaragds of Rubies of eche halfe a Dragme, of perced or unperced pearles, of eche a scruple, of Golde and Siluer beaten into pouder, of eche a Dragme: Let al together be made into a very fine powder, whereof stiring it with Suger dissolued in Rose water, you shall make little Balles of two Dragmes a peece.<sup>82</sup>

Expensive ingredients may have appealed to many readers because, as a kind of fantasy precisely because they were exotic and available only to a wealthy few.

Alexis does provide some recipes for the poor and gives ways to adjust recipes for those that cannot afford the original. For one of the perfumes, Alexis writes, “Nowe he that woulde make the sayde oyle with lesse cost, may make it without Muske, or Ambregrise, or els put lesse in it than we haue spoken.”<sup>83</sup> Some recipes are labeled as being good for the poor, presumably due to the low cost of the ingredients. Such recipes sometimes followed recipes for the same disease. In the third part, Alexis provides a cure for being short winded that requires Juice of Emula Campana, Juice of Isope, and a pound of water of Foal foot mixed “with as much Suger as shall be necessarye.”<sup>84</sup> The recipe that follows, which Alexis describes as “[a]nother tryed secret good for poore folke”, needs only “a pounce of wylde Mallowe or March Mallowe rootes dried in the shadowe, with foure pounce of sodden honny well scummed.”<sup>85</sup> Although Alexis labeled recipes as useful for the poor, they could have been used by the wealthy. No matter who used them, these secrets evince a shift in the rhetoric of secrets away from the old medieval

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<sup>81</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 146.

<sup>82</sup> *Alexis of Piedmont*, 2<sup>nd</sup> part, 7v.

<sup>83</sup> *Alexis of Piedmont*, 1<sup>st</sup> part, 44r.

<sup>84</sup> *Alexis of Piedmont*, 3rd part, 5r-5v.

<sup>85</sup> *Alexis of Piedmont*, 3rd part, 5v.

elitist model. Alexis presented them as something useful for everyone to know about regardless of socio-economic standing.

If the inclusion of trade secrets signalled a shift to greater practical utility, the old notion of occult properties continued to be the explanatory mechanism for how these recipes worked. William Warde, in his introductory letter, presented a worldview in which natural forces were hidden in all things by God.

When God by his diuine power and might, created and made al thinges of nothing...did not onely giue a being & increase vnto euery thing, but also a nature and operation, for the commoditie and profite of man...wherein not only growing on the face of the earth, but also in the bowels of the same, he hath planted things salutiferous & healthfull for man, as herbes, trees, fruites, stones, rootes, waters, Iron tinne, leade: yea, and the dewe of the ayre, so that nothing is vnprofitable, no not the very dunge of beasts, and byrdes, but that it hath some wholesome operation for mans health. In al these thing are certain secret vertues, which be manifest signes of gods loue and fauoure towardes man.<sup>86</sup>

In this section, Warde expresses the common belief found in books of secrets, that within nature, God has hidden beneficial properties within nature that can be exploited. Even though many technical or trade secrets are included in the book, these are said to operate by the same principles as the medicinal or magical secrets.

John Partridge's *The Treasurie Of Commodious Conceits* was first published in 1573. It was printed four more times in the sixteenth century: twice in 1584, and once each in 1586 and 1591. Partridge also wrote three major poems all of which were published in 1566 and *The Widow's Treasure* (1582), another book of secrets for women that occasionally got printed with *Treasurie*.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> William Warde, "The Epistle", in *Alexis of Piedmont*, iir.

<sup>87</sup> "Partridge, John (fl. 1566-1582)," Joyce Boro in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. David Cannadine, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://oxforddnb.com/view/article/21483> (accessed 10 Aug, 2016).

The 1573 edition contains sixty-seven recipes in forty-nine pages, but the content of the book was greatly expanded over the course of the five sixteenth-century editions. For example, while the 1591 edition contains nearly 118 recipes. Most of the new recipes are for medicinal purposes. To make the new recipes fit in the same number of pages, the frontispiece woodcut and two letters in support of the author were removed, and the typeface was reduced in size. Much of the 1573 edition is made up of domestic recipes, mainly cooking recipes or ways to perfume clothing. There are a couple medicinal recipes and instructions on when to pick herbs. At the end is a treatise on examining urine to determine the health of the patient and a recipe for special water that cures many ills. Partridge, also adds some divinatory recipes to determine if a woman could conceive.<sup>88</sup>

The *Treasurie* was the first book of secrets to be published explicitly for women in England and was reflective of the new shift in the culture of secrets that was exemplified by Alexis' book.<sup>89</sup> Partridge follows the trend, arguing that his book provided people or certain groups with information that they had previously not had access to, particularly women. The treatise on urine included in *Treasurie* is the most notable example of this kind, as this diagnostic technique had previously been the preserve of male medical professionals.<sup>90</sup> He begins the treatise with a brief statement of its importance: "It is shewed, that in foure partes of the body dwelleth sicknesse and health: that is, in the wombe, in the head, in the liuer, & in the bladder: In what maner thou maist know their properties, and thereof thou maist learne."<sup>91</sup> This differed

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<sup>88</sup> John Partridge, "The Treasurie of Commodious Conceits, & hidden secrets and may be called the huswives Closet, of healthfull provision." London, 1573. *Early English Books Online*. STC (2nd ed.)/ 19425.5, Fv.v.-Fvii.r.

<sup>89</sup> Kavey, 95.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, 114-115.

<sup>91</sup> John Partridge, "The Treasurie of Commodious Conceits, & hidden Secrets and may be called The Huswives Closet, of healthfull provision." London, 1591. *Early English Books Online*. STC (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)/19429, F5v.



from the other sections of the book, which was predominately filled with recipes for various household uses. The treatise on urine, however, provides women with theoretical knowledge that was usually viewed as masculine.<sup>92</sup> The recipe format of the rest of book provided women with access to processes, such as distillation, in a form that they were familiar with.<sup>93</sup>

Printed books of secrets covered a wide variety of material, although they often focused more on medicinal and trade secrets. Authors presented both Galenic and pseudo-Paracelsian views of the body and cures. Some books, like *Book of Secrets* and *A Thousand Notable Things*, made a strong connection between secrets of nature and astrology. Recipes varied in length and complexity. However, most secrets were short and used few ingredients. Writers of books of secrets explained the effectiveness of their cures using the old notion of the occult virtues found in nature. We also see a shift in content towards the inclusion of highly practical instructions associated with the trades such as perfuming and metallurgy. This was wrapped in a mythology of disclosure, a mythology that was not entirely false.

### **Authors of books of secrets and the expert mediator**

Printed books of secrets were an important part of the sixteenth-century culture, allowing broad sections of society access to information previously limited to specific groups of people. In *Secreti del reverendo donno Alessio Piemontese (The Secrets of Alexis of Piedmont)*, Alexis was the first author to claim that publishing secrets was morally superior to keeping them to a select few as medieval books of secrets had claimed to do.<sup>94</sup> This rhetorical device began a new trend

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<sup>92</sup> Lauren Kassel, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London: Simon Forman; Astrologer, Alchemist, and Physician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 137.

<sup>93</sup> Kavey, 119.

<sup>94</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 139.

in the genre, as writers around Europe emulated Alexis' claim and wrote their books for a broader market. Many of the famous Italian versions claimed to be the product of secret societies, or individuals, who conducted experiments to penetrate the mysteries of nature. They constructed their authority around their ability to travel to obtain secrets, their wealth, and free time they had to test out what they found and ensure the truth of what they passed on. Furthermore, Alexis states that because of his nobility, age, and disposition, the reader can be assured of the truth of his claims. English authors of books of secrets similarly presented their works as providing secrets for public consumption, but they constructed themselves and their authority in different ways. Thomas Lupton and John Partridge sought to establish themselves as what Eric Ash has called "expert mediators." Someone who was neither the wealthy patron, nor the original possessor of the knowledge, but one who fashioned himself as someone expert in collecting crucial knowledge for his clients and the nation at large.<sup>95</sup> Using introductory letters and commendations from other gentlemen, they presented their books as benefiting the common good. In so doing, they presented themselves, not as creators of secrets of nature like their Italian counterparts, but as expert mediators of knowledge.

*The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus*, perhaps the most influential and widely disseminated book of secrets in Europe, illustrates the Scholastic approach to secrets of nature.<sup>96</sup> The writer of *Secrets of Albertus* constructs the text's authority by making many references to Aristotle and Pliny, men, who were well-established in academic culture as authoritative figures.<sup>97</sup> In medieval books of secrets, such as this, only ancient authors and renowned medieval natural philosophers had a claim on expertise. The author of *Secrets of Albertus* also draws on the authority of Aristotle, not just to provide authority to the secrets found in the book, but also

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<sup>95</sup> Ash,

<sup>96</sup> Davies, *Grimoires*, 38-9.

<sup>97</sup> Kavey, 34.

to argue that knowing more about the science of magic and secrets of nature is a good thing. The author states that “the science is chaunged to a good, or to an evel ende, to whiche it worketh.”<sup>98</sup> Therefore, in order to avoid accidentally doing evil, knowledge is required, “for by the knowledge of it; evel may be eschued, & good folowed.”<sup>99</sup> While the recipes found in *Secrets of Albertus* could be taken as those that could only be used for good, ultimately it was up to the reader to justify their desires.<sup>100</sup> Since it was up to the readers, many Scholastic writers, like Roger Bacon (c.1214-1292), thought that only the wise and prudent should have access to secrets of nature.<sup>101</sup>

Bacon's desire, however, does not seem to have been the reality. Despite William Eamon's suggestion that medieval books of secrets were primarily in the domain of the academic and that general readers first gained access to arcane secrets only in the sixteenth century when printers began printing books of secrets for people that were outside of the university, there is considerable evidence of interest in this material by lay readers.<sup>102</sup> In England, vernacularization of academic texts began in the late fourteenth century and was well underway by 1476. While the production costs of manuscripts would still have been prohibitive, non-academics had access to university treatises in English before the arrival of printing in England.<sup>103</sup> The knowledge of nature's secrets was already being passed on to the secular and vernacular society of the courts and households of Europe.<sup>104</sup> The *Secretum secretorum* (*The Secret of Secrets*), considered by Lynn Thorndike as the “[m]ost widely influential book upon the medieval mind” survives in over

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<sup>98</sup> Albertus Magnus, A.ii.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Kavey, 75-77.

<sup>101</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 48-49.

<sup>102</sup> Eamon, “Books of Secrets”, 35-36.

<sup>103</sup> Linda Ehrsam Voigts, “What’s the Word? Biligualism in Late-Medieval England” *Speculum* 71.4 (1996), 814-816.

<sup>104</sup> Mellyn “Passing On Secrets”, 294-5.

six hundred extant manuscripts from the middle ages, both in vernacular and Latin.<sup>105</sup> Thus, it appears that the line between academic and non-academic, Latin and vernacular, was relatively porous in the late middle ages.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, some texts, originally written in the vernacular in the late middle ages, were translated into Latin in the sixteenth century, showing that the transmission of secrets was not always an act of popularization and that secrets of nature had already spread to a vernacular audience before the invention of printing.<sup>107</sup> Printers of *Secrets of Albertus* were not so much providing lay readers with knowledge from the academy that they had never seen before, as taking advantage of topics already popular with their target audience.

The sixteenth-century printed editions of *Secrets of Albertus* also suggest continuity with the previous century in the culture of lay readers. It went through four English editions in the sixteenth century.<sup>108</sup> Multiple editions of this text suggest there was no need to repackage secrets in the sixteenth century the way other books did. Each edition, however, contains one short letter to the reader, either written by the translator or the printer, which is the same in all but the 1599 edition printed by William Jaggard. In the 1560 letter, the writer noted that the book has already been translated into Italian, Spanish, French, and Dutch. Therefore, they hoped that the English version “would be receyved with lyke good wyll and frendshyp, as it is in those partes.”<sup>109</sup> The author then encouraged the reader to use the book “to mitigate, and alacreate, thy heavy & troublesome mynde.”<sup>110</sup> Jaggard changed the letter in his edition slightly mentioning that his translation has “omitted nothing” and, in fact, he added a section on “govrenance of the seaven

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<sup>105</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 45; Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic*, vol. 2, 267.

<sup>106</sup> Mellyn, “Passing on Secrets”, 292.

<sup>107</sup> Michela Pereira, “Alchemy and the Use of the Vernacular Languages in the Late Middle Ages” *Speculum* 74.2 (1999), 351. While it does not appear that any of the books of secrets examined in this thesis were translated into Latin, it shows that authors were not just pillaging the secrets of the academics. That secrets could be disseminated in both directions.

<sup>108</sup> Seven sixteenth-century copies of *Secrets of Albertus* are extant on ESTC.

<sup>109</sup> Albertus Magnus, 1560, “To the Reader”.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*

Planets in the natiuities of children”.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, he adds that readers should test secrets of Albert, and “which as thou shalte finde true in parte or all, I leaue to thine owne reporte or commendation.”<sup>112</sup> This, unlike other books of secrets, encouraged experimentation by the readers and gave them authority when it came to testing secrets.<sup>113</sup>

Italian "professors of secrets" claimed to have gathered the secrets of nature from various travels and experiments in their secret laboratories.<sup>114</sup> Pietmontese, in his introductory letter to the reader, wrote that he “wandered and travailed abroad in the world for the space of .xxvii. yeares.”<sup>115</sup> Isabella Cortese, an alchemical practitioner, wrote of her extensive travels in her book of secrets, *I Secreti* (1561).<sup>116</sup> Italy's most famous book of secrets, *Secreti del reverendo donno Alessio Piemontese*, was apparently the result of experiments carried out by Girolamo Ruscelli's *Accademia Segreta*. Ruscelli later claimed in one of his book of secrets that he wrote *Secreti* under the pseudonym Alessio Piemontese and that the experiments had been produced by a secret society funded by a Neapolitan prince.<sup>117</sup> Likewise, Giambattista Della Porta also created his own secret society to discover the secrets of natures, which he called *Accademia dei Secreti*. Della Porta recorded and printed the experiments conducted by his society in his book of secrets,

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<sup>111</sup> Albertus Magnus, “The secrets of Albertus Magnus. Of the vertues of hearbes, stones, and certaine beasts. ; Whereunto is newly added, a short discourse of the seauen planets gouerning the natiuities of children. Also a booke of the same author, of the maruellous things of the worlde, and of certaine effectes caused by certaine beasts.” London, 1599. *Early English Books Online*. STC (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)/264, “To the Reader”.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Kavey, 74.

<sup>114</sup> For more on the “professors of secrets”, see Eamon, *Science*, Chpt 4.

<sup>115</sup> *Alexis of Piedmont*, v. r.

<sup>116</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 164.

<sup>117</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 147-151. Eamon states that there is no other evidence for Ruscelli's secret society, asides from Ruscelli's own statements about it. As such this could be a rhetorical device to draw attention to his books.

*Magia Naturalis*.<sup>118</sup> Thus, "professors of secrets" of these Italian books present their secrets as coming from their own experiments or experience gained on their travels in search of secrets of nature. Their expertise was a result of being actual practitioners in the field and was represented by their ability to write out the exact process.<sup>119</sup>

Unlike their medieval forebears who established their authority by pseudonymous attribution to great philosophers, authors of Italian books of secrets did so by claiming noble status. In his introductory letter to the reader, Alexis of Piedmont claimed that he was "borne of a noble house and bloode" and furthermore, that he "alwaies had my pleasures, and great plentie of richesse."<sup>120</sup> This allowed him to travel the world in order to learn the secrets of nature "not alonely of men of great knowledge and profound learning, & noble men, but also of poore women, artificers, peysantes, and al sortes of men."<sup>121</sup> His assertion of authority based on his nobility shares some parallels with the claims of the *virtuoso* of the seventeenth century, these gentlemen presented themselves as the only purveyors of truth due to their financial and social independence. Their independence allowed these gentlemen to present things as they really are, whereas those that were dependent on others for their social and economic welfare might misrepresent the facts to gain favour.<sup>122</sup> He also constructs his authority on the basis of experience and education, having acquired secrets from all sorts of people.<sup>123</sup> Alexis' statements in the introductory letter solidifies his position as an authoritative figure:

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<sup>118</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 198-201. Unlike Alexis of Piedmont, who seems to be a literary invention, Della Porta's academy actually existed, although very little is known about it.

<sup>119</sup> Eamon, "How to Read a Book of Secrets", 30.

<sup>120</sup> *Alexis of Piedmont*, v.r.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Shapin, *The Social History of Truth*, 65, 69, 86-7.

<sup>123</sup> Education and experience were also viewed as important in determining what was a fact, especially amongst the Royal Society. See Barbara Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England 1550-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 140-3.

whereas before [the reader] mought have doubted, whether suche remedies set forth by another manne, were trewe or not, he shall be nowe assured, under the affirmaunce of my faythe: For trewly, I woulde not sette my selfe (beynge in the age, and disposition, bothe of body and mynde, that I am nowe in) to wryte fables or lyes.<sup>124</sup>

So, even though some of the secrets may have come from peasants or women, Alexis assures the reader that the following recipes are true. Along with presenting himself as a noble, Alexis' adds to the construction of his authority by claiming a 'venerable' age, further contributing to views of his independence. Alexis' construction of himself as a well-traveled noble, old, and serious figure, establishes him as authoritative and gives credence to those secrets.

Writers of English books of secrets differed from Italian "professors of secrets" in that they compiled their books of secrets from a variety of sources. Rather than focusing on their own experiments created in secret laboratories and traveling abroad to gather secrets, English writers gathered secrets of nature from other printed books or the personal recipe collections of others. Like their Italian counterparts, English authors then synthesized these secrets into brief recipes written for consumption by a popular audience. Lupton compiled his book of secrets from a variety of sources, both old and new, often citing where he got the recipe from. In his introduction he writes "I have selected and picked a great sort out of Latin writers....some notable & precious things I gathered out of some olde English written Bookes, & some also not long since printed."<sup>125</sup> Lupton focused heavily on the writings of Mizauldus, a sixteenth-century French physician, and Walther Hermann Ryff, an early sixteenth-century German medical writer. In the tenth book of *A Thousand Notable Things*, Lupton took a large number of entries from *Joyefull Newes out of the new found Worlde*, which was first published in English two years

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<sup>124</sup> *Alexis of Piedmont*, vi.r.

<sup>125</sup> Lupton, A2r.

prior to Lupton's book.<sup>126</sup> Although Lupton makes claims throughout his book of having tried some of the recipes, it is unlikely that he ever did.<sup>127</sup> In fact, he occasionally states that he has not tried a recipe and that the reader must decide for themselves.<sup>128</sup> Likewise, John Partridge, in *The Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*, claimed to have gathered “certayne hidden Secretes together, & reduced them into one libel, or pamphlet.”<sup>129</sup> He implies that he was knowledgeable about the subject and therefore knew what secrets were true or most useful. English authors of books of secrets compiled their books from a variety of sources, providing readers with synthesized easy-to-use secrets of the natural world.

These authors reflected English humanism by claiming to have produced their works for the benefit of the common good. Many of those involved in the production of natural knowledge in England relied on patronage for their work, especially those outside the academia. English patronage differed from the continental practices in that it focused on utilitarian science, instead of the more ostentatious science pursued on the continent.<sup>130</sup> Humanist-trained gentlemen sought to set themselves above others through their active role in society and their selflessness in serving others and the common good.<sup>131</sup> These gentlemen looked for men and projects that fit

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<sup>126</sup> This also provides some information into how long Lupton might have been writing his book for. As *Joyefull Newes* is only sourced in the tenth, and last book, of *A Thousand Notable Things*, it suggests that the first nine books were written prior to 1577. Otherwise, it would more likely have been interspersed throughout the whole book, like the other source material.

<sup>127</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 258.

<sup>128</sup> Lupton, 209.

<sup>129</sup> Partridge, Aiii.r.

<sup>130</sup> Steven Pumphrey and Frances Dawbarn, “Science and Patronage in England, 1570-1625: A Preliminary Study.” *History of Science* 42.2 (2004), 138-140.

<sup>131</sup> Steven Shapin, “‘A Scholar and A Gentleman’: The Problematic Identity of the Scientific Practitioner in Early Modern England” *History of Science* 29 (1991), 283-289. The rhetoric of serving the common good also bears some connection with the commonwealth men writing during the reign of Edward VI. In particular, Ralph Robinson’s association of a “Godly” commonwealth with a Utopian society in his English translation of More’s *Utopia*. David Weil Baker, “Topical Utopias: Radicalizing Humanism in Sixteenth-Century England” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 36 no. 1 (1996), 9.



their humanist ideals with a focus on education and practical information that would serve them and the state.<sup>132</sup> Partridge exemplifies this new style of patronage. At the urging of an unnamed gentlewoman, he decided to publish his work for the “publique benefite of all men, this lytell Booke: The contents wherof, doth instruct and teach all maner of persones & Degrees to know perfectly, the maner to make divers & sundrie sorts of fine Conceits.”<sup>133</sup> Partridge’s use of English humanist rhetoric could have been used as an attempt to gain patronage, but it additionally serves as a way of associating himself with the perceived authority of a humanist gentleman.

Partridge also establishes his authority by borrowing the rhetoric of collaboration found in many scientific communities and through association with women of high rank.

After that I had ... taken some payne, in collectynge certayne hydden Secretes together, & reduced them into one libel, or Pamphlet (for my own behoofe, & my familiar friends:) yet at the instance of a certayne Gentlewoman (being my dere and speciaall frende) I was constrained to publish the same.<sup>134</sup>

Collaboration played a key part in the daily life of London's guilds and craft professions.<sup>135</sup>

Various groups who studied the natural world either in London, such as the Lime Street naturalists, or the broader international community, like the Republic of Letters, collaborated with one another to obtain specimens for study and verifying each other's work.<sup>136</sup> Partridge’s rhetorical engagement with the ideal of collaboration helps to establish his authority, by claiming participation in a similar sort of community. He suggests that the recipes have been vetted by his “familiar friends” and the certain gentlewoman. The specific mention of the gentlewoman also helps to establish the texts authority, especially since the book is targeted at housewives. Kavey

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<sup>132</sup> Ash, *Power, Knowledge, and Expertise*, 12.

<sup>133</sup> Partridge, A.iii.r.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, A.iii.v.

<sup>135</sup> Harkness, *Jewel House*, 221.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*, 22-24, 31, 44.

argues that the inclusion of the gentlewoman is a way for Partridge to shift the blame of telling secrets and the potential misuse of the information.<sup>137</sup> However, as has been shown, the language surrounding the printing (and thus sharing) of secrets had already shifted by the time Partridge printed his book. Authors argued that they had a moral obligation to print their secrets.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, elite women were responsible for caring for the health of not just their families but the surrounding community, and they often shared their recipes with other women.<sup>139</sup> While the College of Physicians scorned women practicing Galenic medicine, elite women had authority and were an important source of medical care in their communities.<sup>140</sup> In addition, given the inferior social status of Partridge, and other authors of books of secrets, the dedicatee or sponsor of the book (in the case of the unnamed gentlewoman) guaranteed the book's authority.<sup>141</sup> Thus, the gentlewoman gives Partridge's book another level of authority and credibility, especially since the book was directed at women.

Lupton, on the other hand, set out from the beginning to publish his collections for a wider audience.

[P]urposely I have place herein, hereby I thinke verily, many will read them, heare them, and have profit by them, that otherwise shoulde never have knowne them. For many (I suppose) will but this booke for things whereunto they are affectioned, that never could or would have bought or looked on the Bookes, wherein all they are.<sup>142</sup>

Lupton shows not only his desire to help others but also, his access to a wide collection of material and having the skill necessary to determine the most beneficial secrets. Lupton and

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<sup>137</sup> Kavey, 104.

<sup>138</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 143.

<sup>139</sup> Jennifer Stine, "Opening Closets: The Discovery of Household Medicine in Early Modern England" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1996), 33-34; Kavey, 99-100.

<sup>140</sup> Deborah Harkness, "A View From the Streets: Women and Medical Work in Elizabethan London," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82.1 (2008), 56.

<sup>141</sup> Stephen Pumphrey and Frances Dawbarn, "Science and Patronage in England, 1570-1625: A Preliminary Study," *History of Science* 42.2 (2004), 152.

<sup>142</sup> Lupton, A2.v.

Partridge both emulated humanist values in their prefatory letters by claiming to publish their collection of secrets for public benefit.

Prefatory letters were a common element in sixteenth-century books and were used to attract patrons and readers. Despite the decline in literary patronage in England during the latter half of the sixteenth century, writers continued to ask for awards directly or indirectly. Printers turned to other ways of advertising to help recoup their costs, addressing their books directly to readers.<sup>143</sup> With the increase in the publication of technical manuals at this time and in attempts to increase sales (or acquire patronage) many prefaces treated expertise and knowledge as a commodity. Writers and printers crafted the prefatory material of their books to convince consumers of their need for this knowledge and the author's expertise in the matter.<sup>144</sup>

Furthermore, the writers made no mention of profit, they flattered their readers in their material, and they presented themselves as sincere in their concerns for the reader. These rhetorical devices are similar to those found in the courtly attempts at patronage, which often involved flattery and the need to avoid appearing too greedy.<sup>145</sup> Introductory material could also include letters of commendation from others, known as puffing, which helped to promote the expertise of the author.<sup>146</sup>

English authors of books of secrets used these kinds of rhetorical devices in their prefatory material that expressed their expertise and showed greater concern for the reader's profits than their own. Lupton addresses his prefatory letter to the readers of his book. He even went so far as to suggest he was giving them away for free: "Wishing that they may bee accepted

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<sup>143</sup> Paul J. Voss, "Books for Sale: Advertising and Patronage in Late Elizabethan England," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29.3 (1998), 733-4.

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, 747.

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, 748.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*, 749-750.

as thankfully and willingly, as I have bestowed them friendly and freely.”<sup>147</sup> Partridge differs from Lupton, although, in that he addressed his book not to the readers, but to a member of the Barber-Surgeons Company, Master Richard Wistow. This could be an attempt at acquiring patronage, as at the end of his letter Partridge writes, “if I shall see this worke ... be well accepted at your hands I shall shortly exhibite unto your worshyp, a thyng of greater valew and estymation.”<sup>148</sup> His promise of future secrets of even greater value, suggests to the reader and Master Wistow that he has more expertise to share but only if further patronage can make it worthwhile. This also may simply be a rhetorical device, the sort of thing expected from a sophisticated writer.

Two commendatory letters, written by gentlemen in praise of Partridge, add to his image as an expert seeking only to help others. Thomas Curteyse and Thomas Blanck,<sup>149</sup> both sought to convince the reader that buying this book will be greatly beneficial and profit them more than the writer. Curteyse writes that readers “[w]ho eare thou bee, to this incline, [t]he profits thine”.<sup>150</sup> Likewise, Blanck emphasizes Partridge's toil and labour while pointing out to the reader their gain: “And geve hym prayse: that with his toyle, [b]rought home to thee, pleasure & gain: Then thankfull bee, his is the payne.”<sup>151</sup> All of these literary devices are designed to present themselves as experts providing useful information to their readers.

Neither Lupton nor Partridge seem to have had any practical experience with experiments. Thomas Lupton's career as a writer flourished between 1572 and 1584. In that time,

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<sup>147</sup> Lupton, A3.v.

<sup>148</sup> Partridge, Aiiii.v.

<sup>149</sup> Both of these appear to be fake names. An intelligent reader would no doubt have recognized this and taken the letters as literary constructions.

<sup>150</sup> Thomas Curteyse, “Letter in Praise of author” in Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*, A.v.r.

<sup>151</sup> Thomas Blanck, “Letter on behalf of the Author” in Partridge, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*, A.v.v.

he wrote six or seven books and a few other minor pieces. His most popular book, *A Thousand Notable Things of Sundrie Sorts*, however, was also his least moralistic.<sup>152</sup> Partridge (fl. 1566-1582), likewise, is mostly known as a poet and translator. He wrote three long poems (all printed in 1566), *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits* (1573), *The Widowes Treasure* (1582), and several other shorter works. Both *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*, which deals mostly with culinary recipes, and *The Widowes Treasure*, which focuses on medical recipes, are books of secrets.<sup>153</sup> It remains possible that Lupton and Partridge did engage in actively experimenting with secrets of nature, but all the evidence suggests they were simply compilers and writers. In this way, they had more in common with their medieval forebears than the continental professors of secrets, but in another way, they reflected changes in the world of science and patronage.

The increase of funding from the Elizabethan government and the humanist training of the nobility lead to the sponsoring of large-scale projects. These projects, such as the construction of mines or shipyards, required a high degree of technical know-how. Patrons, therefore, sought out men who had the technical knowledge and ability to oversee these projects, Eric Ash called these men "expert mediators." The royal administrators, like the Privy Council, and other patrons hired expert mediators for complex projects that required a large amount of administration.<sup>154</sup> These men did not have to be actual practitioners in the fields that in which they claimed expertise, as it became more important to know why something works rather than just how to do it. The defining characteristic of experts was being able to convince their patrons

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<sup>152</sup> Most of Thomas Lupton's books focused on religious and nationalist issues of the time. He wrote two books arguing against Roman Catholicism and authored other works urging the Queen and England to take up arms against its enemies and for the rich nobility to support the sick and poor financially. "Lupton, Thomas (fl. 1572-1584)," G. K. Hunter in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>153</sup> Joyce Boro, 'Partridge, John (fl. 1566-1582)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21483>, accessed 6 April 2015].

<sup>154</sup> Ash, 56.

that they had mastery over an important and valuable collection of knowledge.<sup>155</sup> Expert mediators often had a humanist education, and this influenced how they portrayed the knowledge that they had. They stressed the importance of their education and the practicality of their expertise that would not only benefit their patron but the commonwealth as well.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, expert mediators sought to publicize their knowledge in print so as to attract patrons and help them control and benefit from, the world they lived in. Even though they may not have been practitioners, they often claimed to have experience.<sup>157</sup>

Thomas Blunderville and Francis Bacon are prime examples of expert mediators in early modern England. Born into a gentry family, Thomas Blunderville served as a tutor for many wealthy families in London. Throughout his career, he wrote and translated several treatises on a variety of subjects from philosophy to mathematics, all of which were written for gentlemen. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was a central figure in the birth of modern science. Like other expert mediators in Elizabethan England was concerned with understanding nature, not just using and controlling it. Blunderville's most important work, for this study, is a work on mathematical exercises focused on nautical math.<sup>158</sup> Bacon's greatest achievement, although, was not in practical works, but through the use rhetoric and metaphor in works such as *New Atlantis*, which pointed out how nature could be used to benefit humanity.<sup>159</sup> Bacon and Blunderville's, both, published books in an attempt to acquire patronage.

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<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>156</sup> Expert mediators under Cromwell and Elizabeth sought to strengthen the crown by improving the commonweal of all English. In this regard, they differ from the authors of books of secrets who do not make any explicit statements of supporting the State. Julian Martin, *Francis Bacon, the State, and the Reform of Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 62-3.

<sup>157</sup> Ash, 12, 140, 201, 211.

<sup>158</sup> *ibid.*, 177-8.

<sup>159</sup> Ash, 188-191; Carolyn Merchant, "Secrets of Nature: The Bacon Debates Revisited" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69.1 (2008), 150.

The two authors differed in their approach to their fields of expertise. Bacon actively participated in experimenting and pursuing his new ideas about science. Bacon encouraged others to conduct their experiments, as long as they followed the methodology he set out. He set himself above the craft practitioners, however, as he claimed that only he and a select few could accurately interpret the data that was collected.<sup>160</sup> Bacon, like the authors of books of secrets, saw gentlemen as the only ones that could be arbitrators of this new natural knowledge.<sup>161</sup> Thus, Bacon would compile the information after he had acquired royal patronage. Blunderville, on the other hand, compiled his work from previous works on the subject with some new practical additions. Whereas Bacon had practical experience with experiments on nature, Blunderville, on the other hand, asserts his authority and expertise on a subject that had previously only been accessible through years of apprenticeship.<sup>162</sup> Yet, despite their different levels of practical experience with their subject matter, both Blunderville and Bacon fit the pattern of the expert mediators.

What Ash has described as the expert mediator and the culture of self-fashioned expertise may have served as a model for a wider group of people than just those vying for noble patronage. Authors of books of secrets also present themselves in a very similar way. Like Bacon and others, English compilers constructed their authority around humanist gentlemen ideals, focusing on the utilitarian aspects of their secrets and desire to benefit their readers.<sup>163</sup> These

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<sup>160</sup> Ash, 188-191.

<sup>161</sup> Harkness, *The Jewel House*, 214. Bacon, however, differs from authors of books of secrets in that he argues for state-controlled knowledge, whereas authors, like Lupton and Partridge, are using this as a rhetorical device to improve the sale of their books. Martin, *Francis Bacon*, 63.

<sup>162</sup> Ash, 177-8.

<sup>163</sup> These English compilers sought to help their readers have a greater control over their lives and by using rhetoric of helping the common good seem to suggest that the recipes could also be a benefit in the reader's public life to help others. However, they lack the political rhetoric of other English humanist works, which argue that benefiting the common good was meant to strengthen the state and crown. See Richard Cust, "The 'public man' in late Tudor and early

authors probably lacked any actual experience in experimenting. However, even without practical knowledge, they still claimed the expertise to decide which secrets were useful and should be included in their books. Unlike the expert mediators mentioned by Ash, these authors did not necessarily publish their books for noble patronage. Instead, they employed the same sort of rhetorical positioning as they vied for reader's patronage through increased sales.

While the authors of Italian books of secrets were known as "professors of secrets," English authors took the role of expert mediators. Italian "professors of secrets" presented their expertise as a result of being active practitioners in the search for secrets of nature. English writers, like Lupton and Partridge, claim to place the welfare of others and the commonwealth above their own. Similar to expert mediators and their patrons, these authors used humanist ideals serving the common good and utilitarian knowledge to establish themselves as experts. Their books, particularly Lupton's *A Thousand Notable Things*, are compilations of other written sources rather than a result of experiments conducted by secret societies. Their understanding and expertise allows them to sort out what recipes will be useful, and present these recipes in an easy to use format for the public and prospective patrons.

## Conclusion

The recipes in books of secrets usually focused on medicine, various trade crafts, and wonders of the natural world. They differed, however, from traditional recipe books in that the recipes relied on the occult properties of plants, stones, and animals. Additionally, they often had a connection to astrology. Books of secrets emphasized when certain plants had to be picked and when cures had to be prepared or administered to make the best use of astrological rays. Planets

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Stuart England” in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 118.



and constellations were also seen as having an effect on various parts of the body and books of secrets were a method of obtaining this information. Authors of sixteenth-century English books of secrets established their authority using similar rhetorical strategies as other scientific groups in the distinctively practical world of Elizabethan patronage and the developing culture of exchange found in sixteenth-century science. They also constructed themselves as expert mediators by compiling their books from a wide variety of sources, claiming to have the expertise to determine which secrets were useful and would, allegedly, work. They differed from their Italian counterparts, who often presented themselves as experimenters of secrets, publishing the experiments of their secret societies, and backed up their claims to authority by stressing their social standing as gentlemen and of financial independence. English authors did, however, copy the motif first created by Alessio of Piedmont: the publishing of secrets was morally superior to that of keeping secrets to a select few. Furthermore, they followed the culture of patronage in England and presented their secrets as utilitarian and beneficial to their readers.

## CHAPTER TWO MANUSCRIPTS

Manuscript books of secrets offer a distinctive avenue to examine the intellectual culture of secrets. The study of manuscripts, however, presents some difficulties that do not exist in the study of printed books. Scribes rarely leave any trace of their identity or introductions detailing their reasons for writing as we have seen with printed books. Nonetheless, manuscripts offer significant advantages. Through them, one glimpses their scribe's secret desires, their sins, and hidden thoughts. The private nature of manuscripts gave their scribes more license to experiment with social norms.<sup>164</sup> These manuscripts were private in the sense that they were hidden from the public (i.e., the State or community) scrutiny and the given the nature of the material would most likely have been kept secret. That is not to say that they would not have been seen by anyone besides the scribe, indeed the elaborate title page of the book of secrets in Sloane 3850 suggests another reader, rather that the audience of these manuscripts is limited.<sup>165</sup> They were also not subject to the influences of the market as printed books, in which authors had to be cautious about what they included and self-consciously prepared books they hoped would sell. The printed books of secrets also reflect the printers' or compilers' views on secrets of nature and how they should be used even though they may not have been genuine enthusiasts themselves. A consideration of manuscripts alongside printed works is thus essential to understanding the culture of secrets in the sixteenth century. To do this, I will consider two collections: Ashmole

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<sup>164</sup> Klaassen, "Learning and Masculinity", 61-62.

<sup>165</sup> Conal Condren, "Public, Private, and the Idea of the 'Public Sphere' in Early Modern England", *Intellectual History Review*, 19.1 (2009), 22; Erica Longfellow, "Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England", *Journal of British Studies*, 45.2 (2006), 315, 333; Paul Hammer, "The smiling crocodile: The Earl of Essex and late Elizabethan 'popularity'" in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, edited by Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 99.

1378 and Sloane 3850, ff. 143-166 (which the scribe titled *Of Love, Kardes, Dies and Tables, and other Consaytes*).

Like the printed versions, manuscript books of secrets contain collections of short recipes and experiments for a variety of purposes, dealing with many of the common problems experienced in sixteenth-century England. They were, in part, a continuation of the medieval tradition, copying “secrets” from popular medieval books, such as *Secrets of Albertus Magnus*. Manuscript versions, however, differed in two crucial ways. They are often more limited in scope than printed books. The scribes limited their collections because of personal interest or lack of sources. Furthermore, the scribes included various elements that are not typically associated with books of secrets. Love potions, thief detection, charms, and ritual magic are fairly common in manuscripts, but rarely if ever appear in printed books. The inclusion of love potions and various charms further deviates from the culture of sixteenth-century printed books of secrets, which typically focused on medical and craft secrets.

### **Secrets of medicine and magic in Ashmole 1378**

Ashmole 1378 contains roughly 180 recipes in over 83 numbered pages written mainly in English with some Latin towards the end. An exact count of recipes is impossible because some of the pages are badly worn making the contents all but invisible. It is mostly concerned with medical cures for a variety of common ailments, like sores, burns, and toothaches. It mixes academic medicine with folk remedies using natural magic. The large number of medical recipes suggests that the scribe had a strong interest in medicine, and the scribe may have been one of the many cunning-folk that were practicing medicine throughout England in the sixteenth

century.<sup>166</sup> The mixture of magic and medicine is not unusual, as the use of magic was woven into everyday life throughout the middle ages.<sup>167</sup> It can be difficult to distinguish between magic and non-magic in such texts because authors of these books were rarely explicit about how they thought the recipes worked.<sup>168</sup>

The majority of recipes in Ashmole 1378 appear in random order, although there are some organizational features. In some cases, several recipes for a particular plant are gathered under one heading. For example, the scribe presents some on page 12 under the line “Artemesia sic motherwort or mugwort. It is hot and dry in the third degree.”<sup>169</sup> The scribe then gives seven different uses for motherwort or mugwort. On another page, the scribe copied three recipes that use asphodel, which he ends with “this herb is hot and dry in the second degree. Here ends asphodel.”<sup>170</sup> Yet recipes that use mugwort appear later in the manuscript, showing that the scribe did not systematically collect recipes from different sources under one heading.<sup>171</sup> Moreover, the majority of the recipes appear at random. Thus, the occasional organization of material into logical categories is more likely a result of the scribe's source material rather than his own conscious efforts.

In one concrete way, the collection in Ashmole 1378 is a continuation of the medieval tradition of books of secrets and naturalia. Two recipes copied from *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus* highlight the scribe's connection to the medieval tradition as well as his interests. Both of the recipes deal with helping a woman conceive:

If a woman maye not conceive Take ye powder of a hartes horn & lett it be myxed  
wt a coves gall, let a woman kepe it abowt hir & then lett her do the acte of

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<sup>166</sup> Davies, *Popular Magic*, 163.

<sup>167</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*; Laura Mitchell, “The Cultural Uses of Magic”.

<sup>168</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 142-143; Eamon, *Science*, 56.

<sup>169</sup> Ashmole 1378, 12.

<sup>170</sup> Ashmole 1378, 18.

<sup>171</sup> There is a recipe for mugwort on page 17.

generacion wt hir husband & she shall conceiue/ a nother for ye same/ Take & gyue the woman mares mylke unknowen to her, then let her doo the act of generacion in yt ower & she shall conceive anone By go[ds] grace.<sup>172</sup>

The scribe (or some later owner), further emphasizes the importance of these experiments by drawing a manculus beside the first recipe. Even though the scribe does not cite *Secrets* or Albertus, the copying of these recipes shows a literal continuation of the literature of secrets. It, however, shows a development on the medieval collections, as practicality or personal choice rather than authority had a more prominent role in the construction of these collections.

The scribe further connects Ashmole 1378 with the medieval tradition by citing Roger Bacon's *Mirror of Lights*, towards the end of the manuscript, as a source for the experiments: "All these experiments were truly copied owt of an olde booke of frier Roger Bacon entituled ye myrror of lyght in anno 15 ut sequitur."<sup>173</sup> *Mirror of Lights* was a late fourteenth or early fifteenth century redaction of the medieval text *Semita recta* which was often attributed to Albertus Magnus.<sup>174</sup> From the copies of *Mirror of Lights* that survive, Peter Grund has pieced together a text that focuses on the logical practice of alchemy and which he describes it as a manual for beginner alchemists.<sup>175</sup> Since Ashmole 1378 contains nothing in the form of alchemical work, and only one short recipe that requires distillation, this attribution seems strange.<sup>176</sup> However, it does show that the scribe's understood his book to be a part of the tradition of medieval works of secrets, alchemy, and naturalia.

Two different systems influenced academic medicine in the early modern period, Galenic and neo-Platonic or Paraselsian. University-trained physicians mainly used the Galenic system

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<sup>172</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1378, 46.

<sup>173</sup> Ashmole 1378, 72.

<sup>174</sup> Peter Grund, "Textual Alchemy: The Transformation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus's *Semita Recta* into the *Mirror of Lights*," *Ambix* 56.3 (2009), 204.

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*, 223.

<sup>176</sup> Ashmole 1378, 33.

which sought to fit ailments into categories purportedly put forward by ancient writers (namely Galen, Hippocrates, and Aristotle). The four humors and everything in nature were categorized as hot, cold, wet, and dry in varying degrees. Illness resulted from a humoral imbalance in the body and physicians employed cures tried to counteract the imbalances.<sup>177</sup> Paracelsian (named after Paracelsus, a sixteenth-century German physician) saw the human body as a microcosm and the universe as a macrocosm. Diseases had external causes, and malevolent planets and stars could have a negative impact on the body. Followers of Paracelsus sought to treat the cause of the illness and often used alchemical treatments. They presented their cures as relying on similarities, like cured like, rather than Galen's system of opposites.<sup>178</sup> While many books in Elizabethan England printed alchemical recipes, they often paid little attention to Paracelsian theories or medical ideas.<sup>179</sup>

Traditional folk medicine also had a major influence on the practice of medicine in sixteenth-century England. Books of secrets, especially, had an important role in the dissemination of this knowledge to academic culture.<sup>180</sup> Traditional folk medicine, according to Keith Thomas, was a mixture of common-sense recipes that were accumulated through experience from nursing and midwifery, and the knowledge system of the various occult properties of natural objects, along with various types of ritual magic and charms.<sup>181</sup> These folk remedies focused on perceived sympathies and antipathies in nature, as well as occult properties found in nature. Many cunning-folk plied their trade throughout Elizabethan England, who employed traditional folk medicine. Their remedies cost far less than those of university-trained

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<sup>177</sup> Jennifer Stine, "Opening Closets", 39-40; Alec Ryrie, *The Sorcerer's Tale: Faith and Fraud in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 36-37.

<sup>178</sup> Stine, "Opening Closets", 39-40; Kassel, *Medicine and Magic*, 7.

<sup>179</sup> Kassel, *Medicine and Magic*, 105.

<sup>180</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 259.

<sup>181</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 210.

physicians and were used by both rich and poor. These practitioners had varying degrees of training and literacy and often had other trades. Those living in England in the sixteenth century had many different options when it came to maintaining their health and acquiring medicine for common ailments.

The use of Galenic theory in Ashmole 1378 suggests a further evidence of the medieval tradition. Several times throughout the manuscript the scribe mentions Galen's views on specific herbs: "Galen says that wormwood has many virtues in it" and "Peony ... is hot and dry in the second degree, so says Hippocrates and Galen the good philosophers; they say that the root thereof is good for divers medicines and it will last ten years."<sup>182</sup> Other times, the scribe does not reference Galen but still uses Galen's humoral theory to understand how some recipes work: "This featherfew is good for broken bones ... And the root thereof is good to stop the bloody menses; it is hot and dry."<sup>183</sup> The references to Galen suggests that the scribe had some interest in the more academic approach to medicine. Medieval books of secrets relied heavily on ancient writers in their construction of authority.<sup>184</sup> Likewise, the scribe of Ashmole 1378 uses the medical authority of Galen to construct his own authority within the manuscript. This continuation of the medieval tradition of building legitimacy based on authoritative voices.

The scribe of Ashmole 1378 drew mostly upon Galenic and folk medicine, although there is one recipe that requires distillation which, along with the reference to *Mirror of Lights*, suggests some connection to alchemical medicine. The recipe requires the user to have access to alchemical equipment: "Good to amend your eye-sight. Take the buds of fennel and the crops of vervain and red roses and the roots of celadine and the crops of the herb 'grace'; all these must

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<sup>182</sup> Ashmole 1378, 16, 25.

<sup>183</sup> *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>184</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 55.

be distilled together; then take off the water and drop it in the patient's eye."<sup>185</sup> Although the recipe does not specifically refer to Paracelsus or his theories about medicine, it was not uncommon for English books to make use of Paracelsian techniques while ignoring the more theoretical aspects of Paracelsus' work.<sup>186</sup> Without specific reference to Paracelsus it is impossible to determine what influences the scribe was drawing upon in this recipe. This eclectic mix of recipes, however, shows that the scribe was not just focused on a single knowledge system of medicine, but rather on gathering recipes from a variety of sources to address the needs and desires in his life. While people recognized the difference between the Galenic remedies of the university-trained physician and the cure-alls of the empiric, medical practitioners in the sixteenth century often used both medical systems. Collections of recipes, like Ashmole 1378, illustrated that readers took an active and indiscriminate interest in medicine, and often combined academic and folk medicine in an eclectic mix that showed a lack of focus on a particular source.<sup>187</sup>

Most of the recipes in the collection fit within the definition of traditional folk medicine. A broad category that is typically defined by the use of occult properties of plants, animals, and stones, verbal and written formulas, and passive forms of divination.<sup>188</sup> Most people did not use common magic for grandiose schemes to acquire wealth, but for struggling to maintain the status quo, overcoming general health problems and protecting their modest possessions.<sup>189</sup> In Ashmole 1378 many of the recipes are used for typical medical problems, such as:

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<sup>185</sup> Ashmole 1378, 33.

<sup>186</sup> Kassel, *Magic and Medicine*, 105.

<sup>187</sup> Andrew Wear, *Health and Healing in Early Modern England: Studies in Social and Intellectual History* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1998), 17-22, 35.

<sup>188</sup> Michael Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 83-91; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 210.

<sup>189</sup> Bailey, *Magic and Superstition*, 81.



For sore running eyes. Take a good handful of hound's-lick and stamp it and strain it. Let it stand till it is clear then put the clear water into an egg shell and set it in the fire and put in a little sugar and set it in the fire and skim off the froth, and when it is cold put a little into the eyes with a feather.<sup>190</sup>

The cunning-folk of Elizabethan England employed such recipes in their everyday practice.<sup>191</sup> It is unclear, however, whether the scribe thought that the cures worked because of occult properties or by other means.

In part, the scribe's driving principle of the collection was practicality. The scribe seems to have collected recipes in order to put them to some use. One of the recipes includes a description of the plant and where it can be commonly found. It is worth quoting here in full to further discuss the knowledge presented in this entry:

Asterion. This herb asterion grows among stones and in high places; and it shows by night and it has yellow flowers, whole and round as a cockle; and the leaves be round and blue; and they have the mark of the moon in the midst of the leaf as it were three-leaved grass; and they be round as a penny; and the juice of it is yellow; and this herb grows in the new of the moon with-out leaf; and every day springs a new leaf to the end of fifteen days, and after fifteen days it loses every day a leaf; as the moon wanes; and it springs and wanes as does the moon and where it grows there grows great plenty.<sup>192</sup>

Like the copying of medical texts, the description had a utilitarian purpose, allowing the user to find the ingredients required for the recipes that follow. This differed from some of the recipes found in printed books of secrets, which required exotic ingredients. For example, in *Secrets of Albertus*, requires a stone "from the Dragons head" to overcome one's enemies.<sup>193</sup> The use of exotic ingredients suggest that the author was more concerned with instilling wonder rather than curing. By including a description of the plant, this scribe was interested in actually finding the plant and using it.

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<sup>190</sup> Ashmole 1378, 1.

<sup>191</sup> Stine, "Opening Closets", 86.

<sup>192</sup> Ashmole 1378, 19-20.

<sup>193</sup> Albertus Magnus, 1560, D.v.v.

The scribe's collection habits preserve some of the medieval tradition of books of secrets with the inclusion of magic tricks. Three experiments in Ashmole 1378 fit into the category of magic tricks: one to go invisible, another to know a woman's mind and secrets, and one to make women dance naked.<sup>194</sup> Magic tricks often appeared in books of secrets, and by the fifteenth century a strong link had developed between natural magic and magic tricks.<sup>195</sup> So the appearance of these experiments in Ashmole 1378 is not unusual. Magic that was used for entertainment helped to create a sense of wonder, both in books of secrets and in the European courts.<sup>196</sup> Courtiers sought to use their perceived ability to control nature and perform awe-inspiring tricks for social and political gain.<sup>197</sup> Hugh Platt criticized those courtiers that used secrets of nature for entertainment and argued that they should focus more on the practical use of nature.<sup>198</sup> While the experiment to go invisible is fairly innocent, the experiments to become invisible and make women dance naked would have been seen as immoral.<sup>199</sup> Some medieval books of secrets, like *Secrets of Albertus*, did include experiments for invisibility, however, experiments that make the victims dance naked show a deviation from the medieval academic tradition of books of secrets.

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<sup>194</sup> "To goo in viseable Take a stone wch is in a blake lapewymks nest when she hathe lonnge it is of dyvers collou[r] & bare it a bowt ye." Ashmole 1378, 46; "To know womens mindes and secrets: take ye hed of a white pigion or of a turtell dove burne ye blod & <...> hed to powder and are it be thorow colde myxe it wt a quatite of stone hony and when ye lyst to proue it anoynte ye brestes of a woman & thow shalte know all hyr mynd & what thow desyerst thow shalte haue it of hyr." Ashmole 1378, 58; "To make a woman daunce naked, write these names in a volume of pur parchment wt the blode of an owle also mole vita rasta aia & put it under the threshold of ye dore Or of ye house wher she is. & she shall wt in a whill daunce naked. & take it away & she shall leaue. So yt it be burned. There be leters to do the sam <...> feate", Ashmole 1378, 73.

<sup>195</sup> Mitchell, "Cultural Uses of Magic", 56.

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*, 129-130.

<sup>197</sup> Swann, *Curiosities and Texts*, 25-26.

<sup>198</sup> Ayesha Mukherjee, "The Secrets of Sir Hugh Platt", in *Secrets and Knowledge in Medicine and Science*, edited by Elaine Leong and Alisha Rankin (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 72; Eamon, *Science*, 311-314.

<sup>199</sup> Mitchell, *Cultural Uses of Magic*, 150.

Towards the end of the manuscript, the scribe deviates from both the medieval and sixteenth-century traditions of books of secrets. Recipes for love potions and to find and protect against thieves connect Ashmole 1378 with cunning-folk. Three charms against thieves represent the more socially acceptable parts of the deviation. The first allows one to bind one's house from thieves. Although this charm provides little information as to how it is intended to work or how it is created, stating only that: "Saint Winwall and Saint Braston and Saint Tobas and the sun that shines so bright in heaven on high. He fetches his light in the day and night to destroy all poison with his beams so bright."<sup>200</sup> The second experiment relies on divination to determine who has taken something from the user of the experiment: "If you will know if anybody have anything of yours, write these letters in virgin wax with knife and lay it under you head in the night Ff. h. g. d. i. [?] & you shall know who has it. It is proved."<sup>201</sup> Divination was a common technique employed by cunning-folk to find thieves.<sup>202</sup> Lastly, the scribe concludes with a charm that will bind the thief in the house.<sup>203</sup>

Some cunning-folk were itinerant healers, many of whom were also craftspeople. They typically offered services in "love magic, thief detection, astrology, fortune telling, herbalism, and unbewitching."<sup>204</sup> They were viewed as having acquired knowledge beyond that of their peers, either through supernatural means or from merely being able to read and write. As such,

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<sup>200</sup> Ashmole 1378, 73.

<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*, 74.

<sup>202</sup> Owen Davies, *Popular Magic: Cunning-folk in English History* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), 99-101.

<sup>203</sup> "So the Holy Ghost my bequeath that in this place be set so the Father and the Son all thieves for to let and if any thieves hither come the Holy Ghost be them before and make them for to let and make them to abide until I again come Through the virtue of the Holy Ghost the Father and the Son now go my way tyde what man betide if any thief hither come here shall..." Ashmole 1378, 77.

<sup>204</sup> Davies, *Popular Magic*, 75.

they would often use magic books as a way to demonstrate their knowledge.<sup>205</sup> Although in the fifteenth century, few charms for identifying thieves and for love were written down, possibly because these were seen as knowledge belonging to cunning-folk.<sup>206</sup> The inclusion of charms to protect against thieves, magic that typically belonged to cunning-folk, show that the scribe was not just copying the medieval tradition of books of secrets, but adapted the format to his own views on secrets.

The inclusion of charms in this book of secrets highlights that the fact that the divide between high and low cultures was not an impenetrable barrier in a similar way that craft knowledge did in printed books of secrets. Sixteenth-century printed books of secrets provided a negotiation between elite and popular cultures. In particular, they bridged the gap between theory and experiment by including both craft knowledge of the guilds and the theoretical scientific knowledge of the universities.<sup>207</sup> Similarly, Ashmole 1378 blends elite and popular cultures of medicinal knowledge. Charms belonged to the common tradition of magic and were often used by cunning-folk and lay healers.<sup>208</sup> Whereas, references to Galen throughout the manuscript show the more academic side of medicine. The mixing of charms with more academic medicine of Galen in Ashmole 1378 shows the intermingling of elite and popular culture in books of secrets. In short, scribes of manuscript books of secrets were, like the authors of printed books, what William Eamon calls cultural brokers, providing elements from learned works in vernacular form and traditional medicine or magic in written form.<sup>209</sup>

The scribe deviates from the medieval and sixteenth-century print traditions by including love magic in his book of secrets. The last twenty pages contain twenty recipes for love magic.

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<sup>205</sup> *ibid.*, viii, 70.

<sup>206</sup> Mitchell, “Cultural Uses of Magic”, 76.

<sup>207</sup> Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, 110-3.

<sup>208</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 56.

<sup>209</sup> Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, 105.

The majority of the love magic in Ashmole 1378 takes the form of charms and amulets, usually divine names written on apples or cheese and given to the person one desires. One of the recipes makes the use of natural magic, this recipe calls for raven's brains to be mixed with wheat or barley, baked into a loaf of bread and given to the woman.<sup>210</sup> This recipe also appears in Sloane 3850, which shows that this recipe belonged to a shared tradition and provides further connection between the two manuscripts.<sup>211</sup> Love magic was used by both common people and nobility, often on a husband or wife who has strayed from their marital vows.<sup>212</sup> The experiments in Ashmole 1378, however, seem to be about making any woman fall in love with the user. Two involve writing divine names, your name, and her name on an apple or piece of cheese and giving it to her.<sup>213</sup> A third experiment differs it requires one to “Take the blode of white kooke[cock] or hen & write bothe yowr names wt it in a lue leafe & towche hir wt it.”<sup>214</sup> The scribe also used charms and amulets as a form of love magic. The longest charm in Ashmole 1378 was written in Latin:

Take an apple and after the division in four parts in each part, broken or unbroken, write these names: ‘sathiel sathiel obgniget siugel’ and the conjuration of the apple should be said three times: “I conjure you apple by god, the holy wine, one and true, by holy god and the god who created you and by the four evangelists, by Samuel, and by holy Mary and by all the innocents”<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Ashmole 1378, 66.

<sup>211</sup> London, British Library, Sloane MSS 3850, f. 148r.

<sup>212</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, 277-8.

<sup>213</sup> The most legible one is: “write in a appell or in chese flem[o] bramo tetragramaton & thy nam[e] & hir name & giue it hir to eat.” Ashmole 1378, 69.

<sup>214</sup> These three experiments all have that title that begins with “to have”, the rest is, unfortunately, illegible. Since most of the recipes that immediately precede and follow these three experiments have to do with acquiring love, it is most likely that these three also have to do with acquiring love. Ashmole 1378, 69.

<sup>215</sup> “Accepi poma et post deuisam in quatuor partem singulis p[ar]tibu[s] fracti vel in fracti scribe hec nomi[nes] sathiel sathiel obg[iu]get si[a]g[el] et coniuracio pome est trium dicenda coniuro te pomam p[er] deum sanctum vinum unus et verum p[er] deum sanctum et deum te creauit et p[er] quatuor euangile p[er] samvelem et p[er] sanctam mariam et p[er] omnes inosentes” Ashmole 1378, 65.

None of these recipes specify that it is only for love between a husband and wife, and as such could have been used to acquire the love of any woman. Yet even if the intent of these elements was entirely honourable, they stray well beyond the bounds of the material in printed books of secrets.

The scribe of Ashmole 1378 collects material that shows his book of secrets to be, in part, a continuation of the medieval tradition, but he includes material from sources outside of that tradition to address his fears and desires. The scribe references Galen on several different occasions throughout the manuscript, as well as he makes use of Galenic system of medicine. These references draw on Galen's authority as a medical figure lends credibility to the recipes in Ashmole 1378, they also suggest an intent to connect the manuscript with the medieval tradition of naturalia and medicine. By referencing a work by Roger Bacon, the scribe furthers this connection with the medieval tradition and the importance of received authority. Magic tricks and experiments for love and thief detection, however, deviate both from the medieval tradition and from the material found in sixteenth century printed books of secrets.

### **Fun and games: Pursuit of fantasy, entertainment, and control in Sloane 3850 ff 143-166**

Printed books of secrets were usually regarded as a mix of natural magic and trade secrets. The book of secrets in Sloane 3850, however, mixes ritual magic with natural experiments and charms. Experiments for invisibility and making people dance naked to show the scribe's focus on using secrets for entertainment. These experiments also used ritual magic and were often sexual in nature, something that is not found in printed books of secrets. Charms for love and finding thieves were outlawed in the sixteenth-century. Their inclusion in Sloane 3850 shows further deviation from the print culture of secrets. Furthermore, they show the scribe

was not just concerned with controlling nature but also controlling others. While Sloane 3850 does have some connection with the medieval tradition and sixteenth-century print culture of secrets, it deviates significantly from this culture.

Like the scribe of Ashmole 1378, the scribe of *Of Love, Kardes, Dies and Tables, and other consaytes* (henceforth referred to as *Of Love*) self-consciously constructed his book of secrets in the ongoing tradition. By labeling his book as a book of conceits, the scribe highlights the ludic nature of his work. In the sixteenth-century, conceit was defined as a “fancy, fantastical notion” or “a pleasant fancy”.<sup>216</sup> Labelling secrets as conceits is not unique, as Partridge also labeled secrets as conceits, although based on the material found in *Of Love*, the scribe probably viewed his work in a more humorous light.<sup>217</sup>

Further connecting *Of Love* to the tradition of naturalia is the experiments that have a close resemblance to recipes in *Secrets of Albertus Magnus* and medieval lapidaries. Four experiments near the beginning of the book of secrets use a specific stone to become invisible. One longer experiment highlights the connection to *Secrets of Albertus*:

Go to a swalloes neste when she haue yovngons be twen nine and a leven put out ther eyes & come agayn the second day at the sam our and you shall fynd a marvelous stone of sundry colores and take on of them and in y<sup>r</sup> mouthe and locke vpon on side fastly and it will begyne to loue you and take a pece of y<sup>e</sup> bignes of y<sup>e</sup> .3. stones and lay in y<sup>e</sup> neste and com agayn the third day and you shall fynd a nother ston et fiat.<sup>218</sup>

The entry in *Secrets of Albertus* similarly involves a stone of many colours:

Take the stone, which is called Ophethalmius, and wrappe it in the leafe of the Laurell, or Baye tree, & it is called Lapis obtelmicus, whose colour is not named, for it is of many colours, and it is of such vertu, that it blindeth the sightes of them

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<sup>216</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language In Which The Words are deduced from their Originals, Explained in their Different Meanings, and Authorized by the Names of the Writers in whose Works they are found* (Dublin, 1768).

<sup>217</sup> Partridge, *The Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*.

<sup>218</sup> Sloane 1378, f. 145r.

that stand about. Constantinus carrying this in his hand, was made invisible by it.<sup>219</sup>

Lapidaries were an accepted part of medieval sciences.<sup>220</sup> They also had an influence on medieval book of secrets. In particular, the lapidary section of *Secrets of Albertus* draws heavily on Albertus' *De mineralibus*.<sup>221</sup> The inclusion of several recipes that make use of the occult properties of stones shows a continuity with the medieval tradition of secrets, naturalia, and lapidaries in their book of secrets.

The book of secrets Sloane 3850 is unique compared to other manuscript books of secrets, as the scribe has created a title page for the book: *Of Love, Kards, Dies and Tables, and other consaytes*. The scribe's artless attempt at making the manuscript seem sophisticated or important is continued over the next couple of folios by providing stylized titles for the experiments. However, the writing is sloppy and the scribe abandoned the pretence after the first couple of folios. As the title suggests many of the recipes are concerned with love magic, or winning at cards and dice. It is written mostly in English with some passages of poorly copied Latin. Some of the recipe titles are also written in a simple cipher, replacing the vowels with numbers one through five, no doubt intended to give the impression of secrecy. *Of Love* contains a variety of different types of magic including necromancy, ritual magic, charms, and natural magic.

The material in *Of Love* is ordered roughly by purpose. It begins with two necromantic rituals to acquire a ring of invisibility. Between these two rituals are four experiments for invisibility that make use of natural magic (ff. 144r-146v). This is followed by eight folios full of potions and amulets for love (ff. 147r-152v). A few more also appear at the end (f. 166r). The

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<sup>219</sup> *Secrets of Albertus Magnus*, C.i.v.

<sup>220</sup> John M. Riddle, "Lithotherapy in the Middle Ages: Lapidaries Considered as Medical Texts" *Pharmacy in History* 12.2 (1970), 40-41.

<sup>221</sup> Eamon, *Science*, 71.



next section deals with being able to know whether a woman is a virgin and making people, usually women, dance naked in a house (ff. 153r-154v). After this, the scribe includes several experiments for amulets and charms that will help the wearer win at various forms of gambling (ff. 155r-156r). The last significant section deals with theft detection (ff. 160r-161r). There are also three recipes for hunting towards the end of the manuscript (f. 161v).

The two rituals to obtain a ring of invisibility serve as literary boasts of sexual fantasy. The first ritual begins with a charge to perform the ritual in a secret place.<sup>222</sup> After an initial conjuration, the magician lies on a bed naked with his eyes covered with a silk cloth. Then, if the magician's conjuration was successful, he will be visited by three beautiful sisters dressed all in white, who will give the magician a ring of invisibility.<sup>223</sup> The magician in this ritual presents himself as being in control of his sexuality. He abstains from ".h. & .G." (it is unclear what the scribe means by this) for fifteen days before conjuring the spirits, but also engages in the titillating fantasy of being naked in front of three beautiful women. In the second ritual, the scribe removes the requirements and bravado of sexual purity. Once again, the magician summons three women (in this case they are identified as virgins). Holding a scepter in front of the face of the fairest one, the magician kisses her.<sup>224</sup> Later in the ritual, the magician and the spirit "go naked to bed ly on ye righte side of ye bed & she on ye lyfte sid of ye bed <...> do what you wilt".<sup>225</sup> Such elements of sexual fantasy would have served as entertainment and a literary form of boasting for the all-male peer group or readership of the ritual magician.

While these two rituals draw on the medieval traditions of ritual magic, they also display how ritual magic was adapted in books of secrets. The scribe's use of Latin in these rituals shows

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<sup>222</sup> Sloane 3850, f. 144r.

<sup>223</sup> Sloane 3850, ff. 144r-144v.

<sup>224</sup> Sloane 3850, f. 146v.

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.*

a continuation of the medieval ritual magic and a connection with an educated elite. However, he seems not to have been very Latinate, as the Latin sections are full of errors which suggest difficulties expanding Latin contractions.<sup>226</sup> Such experiments for invisibility were not uncommon in the fifteenth century.<sup>227</sup> In some fifteenth-century manuscript books of secrets, ritual magic appears to have been edited, getting rid of the more clerical elements of the rituals. Scribes outside of the monasteries were not as limited in their ability to marry, and as such, did not have some of the problems with acquiring masculinity that clerics did.<sup>228</sup> They could in engage in the secular world and were not as limited in their expression of sexuality, unlike the clergy that made up the clerical underworld. As such, often elements, such as the emphasis on sexual purity and references to abstinence, were edited out of the rituals that appear in books of secrets.<sup>229</sup> The scribe of *Of Love* seems to have followed this pattern of editing or copied from sources that did. As mentioned before, the second ritual contains no requirements for sexual purity prior to performing the ritual and encourages the magician to have sex with the spirit.<sup>230</sup> These rituals emphasize how this collection diverges from the academic tradition of books of secrets and sixteenth-century printed books of secrets.

Experiments for forcing others to dance, especially if they are naked, provided the magician with a sense of control over others and imaginative fantasy. Sloane 3850 contains six experiments to make people dance, and all but one adds that they will dance naked. All six experiments require the manufacturing of an amulet, with divine names written in the blood of

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<sup>226</sup> Frank Klaassen and Katrina Bens, “Achieving Invisibility and Having Sex with Spirits: Six Operations from an English Magic Collection ca. 1600,” *Opuscula* 3.1 (2013), 8.

<sup>227</sup> Mitchell, “Cultural Uses of Magic”, 143-144.

<sup>228</sup> Mitchell, “Cultural Uses of Magic, 154-155.

<sup>229</sup> *ibid.*, 155-159.

<sup>230</sup> Sloane 3850, f. 146v.

various animals, and buried under the threshold of the house.<sup>231</sup> These experiments could serve as a kind of puerile titillation for the scribe. Since dancing was often condemned by penitential writers, these experiments would most likely have been seen as socially problematic.<sup>232</sup>

Not only did *Of Love* contain magic which was socially problematic, it also contained magic which was technically against the law. Something that the printed books of secrets eschewed. The experiments in *Of Love* violated two of the three main articles of the Act against Conjurations, Witchcrafts, Sorcery, and Enchantment, first enacted in 1542 by Henry VIII.<sup>233</sup> Namely, the detections of thieves and lost or stolen goods and love magic:

...taken upon them to declare and tell where things lost or stollen shulde be become; wiche thinges cannot be used and exercised but to the great offence of Godes lawe, hurt and damage of the Kinges Subjectes, and losse of the sowles of such Offenders, to the greate dishonor of God, Infamy and disquyetnes of the Realme....yf any persone or persones, ... use devise practise or exercise, or cause to be used devysed practised or exercised, any Invocacons or conjuracons of Sprites wichecraftes enhauntmentes or sorceries ... to p[ro]voke any persone to unlawfull love, or for any other unlawfull intende.<sup>234</sup>

The Witchcraft Acts were part of a mid-sixteenth-century shift in thinking by authorities that saw magic not only as a social disruption but also as being heretical and involving satanic complicity.<sup>235</sup> This Act, amongst other things, targeted those that claimed to be able to find lost or stolen things, invocations and conjurations for treasure hunting, and the provocation of unlawful love.<sup>236</sup> Love magic, in particular, had been associated with sorcery during the middle ages. Even when used for a seemingly innocent reason, such as a wife trying to regain the affection of her husband, theologians and lawyers viewed it as evil because it constrained the

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<sup>231</sup> Sloane 3850, ff. 154r-154v.

<sup>232</sup> Mitchell, "Cultural Uses of Magic", 150.

<sup>233</sup> It is also commonly called "The Witchcraft Act".

<sup>234</sup> Henry VIII, "An Act against Conjurations, Witchcraft, Sorcery, and Enchantment 1541/2" in *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750*, edited by Marion Gibson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>235</sup> Davies, *Popular Magic*, 2.

<sup>236</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

will.<sup>237</sup> The inclusion of illegal magic further emphasizes the scribe's deviation from printed books of secrets in constructing his collection.

Another way in which this collection diverges from the material found in printed books of secrets was through its inclusion of various charms and amulets. The charms and amulets in Sloane 3850 show a desire to control others, often ways that were explicitly illegal. The goal of many of the charms in *Of Love* was to make someone, usually a woman, to fall in love with the user. Love magic was a common feature of medieval magic, and the scribe of Sloane 3850 seems to follow that trend as he dedicates a large section of his book of secrets to love magic.<sup>238</sup> These charms, amulets, and experiments, express the scribes desire for control over his anxiety of not being able to attract a member of the opposite sex, but also his desire to control women. Some of the experiments added gestures or objects, often sexual in nature.<sup>239</sup> One experiment in Sloane 3850 involves the use of a hazel rod:

Take a hassel rod of one years growth and say a pater noster, a ave and a creed, dominus deus noster, and dominus regnaull. And then in the midst pen the rod and then say: I conjure the rod by our father and the son and the holy ghost and by the mother of our lord Jesus Christ that he or she that be smiten here with shall yield to me love everlasting.<sup>240</sup>

If the hazel rod is taken as a phallic symbol, then the act of hitting others would have, at least to the magician, be seen as both a sign of sexual control over others and as puerile entertainment. Charms enjoyed commonplace use throughout the middle ages and early modern period. The Church often criticized the use of charms, St. Augustine and Aquinas argue that they could be used to signal demons, especially if they made use of strange words and symbols. Charms and amulets had a variety of uses although typically, they were used for health reasons, with medical

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<sup>237</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 81.

<sup>238</sup> Mitchell, "Cultural Uses of Magic", 151.

<sup>239</sup> *ibid.*, 155-156; Kieckhefer, "Erotic Magic", 30-33.

<sup>240</sup> Sloane 3850, f. 148v.

charms being far more prominent than love charms or charms against thieves.<sup>241</sup> The charms found in *Of Love* show a break from the more common material found in medieval books of secrets with far more emphasis on love charms than medical ones. As well, the sexual nature or goal of many of these charms is something that is not found in the charms in printed books of secrets, showing a distinct culture of secrets in manuscript books of secrets.

The scribe of *Of Love* diverged from the traditional medieval and sixteenth-century printed view of secrets of nature by using ritual magic, charms, amulets, and natural magic as a pursuit of entertainment and control over others, often in a sexualized manner. By including ritual magic in his book of secrets, the scribe combined two types of magic (ritual and natural) that were rarely combined in the medieval tradition. Charms and amulets for love found in *Of Love* show some connection with the medieval tradition. However, these charms were made illegal by Henry VIII's Witchcraft Act and are not found in sixteenth-century printed books of secrets.<sup>242</sup> *Of Love* shows the distinct culture of secrets in sixteenth-century manuscript books of secrets, as the scribe collected secrets that might have helped him to overcome his fears and desires.

## Conclusion

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<sup>241</sup> Mitchell, "Cultural Uses of Magic", 60.

<sup>242</sup> It is unclear whether these charms were excluded from the printed books of secrets because of state censorship, the compiler's excluding the material because they did not think it would sell or did not want to risk printing illegal material, or they did not have access to these charms or other charms like them. State censorship under the Tudors, especially during the reign of Elizabeth, was often haphazard and most printed material received little or no scrutiny. Some love charms appear in *The Secrets of Albertus*, which printed books in this study copy some recipes from. The compilers of these printed books had access to some examples of love charms, and, most likely, decided to self censor their works either to avoid potential trouble with the State or Stationers company, or thought that they would not sell. For more on Elizabethan press censorship see Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Similar to printed books of secrets, much of the Ashmole 1378 is concerned with healing common ailments. Many of these recipes fit within the description of traditional folk medicine. However, there are also strong connections with the academic medicine of Galen and Hippocrates. The scribe also expresses interest in the detection of thieves and the use of love magic, elements that were commonly associated with cunning-folk. The use of love magic and the charms to make people dance naked show that the scribe also saw magic as a form of entertainment and a desire to control others. These elements were illegal in sixteenth-century England and did not appear in printed books of secrets. As such, they show that manuscript books of secrets deviated from the print culture of secrets. However, while Ashmole 1378 contains some elements that did not appear in printed books of secrets, the majority of the manuscript deals with similar matter and in similar ways to printed books. It also constructs authority to a similar manner in combining ancient and medieval authority with the authority of personal experience.

In contrast, *Of Love, Kardes, Dies and Table, and other Consaytes* focused more on the ludic qualities and use of magic than Ashmole 1378 or printed books. Experiments for invisibility and to get people to dance (naked or clothed) point to the use of magic as a form of entertainment. As well, these goals were socially problematic and rarely appeared in printed books. In regards to invisibility, the scribe goes beyond those experiments found in printed books by using ritual magic as a way of achieving his goals. By collecting both ritual and natural magic in the same book, the scribe also deviates from the medieval tradition. Amulets and charms can be found throughout printed books and they are often used for medicinal purposes. In *Of Love*, the scribe uses charms and amulets to acquire love and to win at various types of gambling. The love charms, in particular, were illegal in England in the late sixteenth century. These charms

were rarely found in the popular medieval books of secrets and not at all in the new printed books of secrets in the sixteenth century.

A lack of trade secrets in these to manuscripts shows the notable difference between them and sixteenth-century printed books of secrets. These two books of secrets are illustrative of the fact that the construction of secrets of nature and natural magic went beyond what was presented by compilers of printed books. Both Ashmole 1378 and *Of Love* contain elements that were often associated with cunning-folk and are very rarely found in printed books. The scribe of Sloane 3850 presents a connection between ritual magic and secrets of nature, by including two rituals in his book of secrets. While these manuscripts are similar in form to printed books of secrets, they differ in function. The private nature of manuscripts provided scribes with the opportunity to explore how secrets of nature can be used for illicit or socially problematic purposes or to aggrandize themselves by claiming the ability to control and entertain others.

The absence of trade secrets does not, however, suggest the manuscript books were an altogether different genre or that they had entirely different sensibilities than their printed cousins. These books also blended elite and popular culture and their scribes operated as “cultural brokers” by blending learned material from traditional books of secrets and ritual magic with the low magic of cunning folk and charms.<sup>243</sup> Ashmole 1378, in particular, highlights this mixing of elite and popular cultures. Much of the book of secrets focuses on Galen and more academic medicine however, the charms at the end of the manuscript connects it to cunning-folk and the common tradition of magic. The combination of material from both elite and

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<sup>243</sup> Here I am drawing on Holt Parker’s definition of popular culture which includes things which require little culture capital to produce or consume. With this definition, books of secrets can be considered popular culture because they would require little culture or economic capital to consume. Holt Parker, “Towards a Definition of Popular Culture,” *History and Theory* 50 (2011), 162.

popular culture show that there was not a strict divide between the two and that books of secrets served as a vessel between the two.



### CHAPTER THREE GENDERED USE OF SECRETS

The construction of gender is one of the ways that manuscripts reveal parts of the culture of secrets not seen in printed books. Many sixteenth-century printed books of secrets in England seem to be focussed on women and deal with classically feminine concerns, reinforcing classic female gender constructions.<sup>244</sup> These books are comparable to the conduct literature of the period which set out certain sets of duties and ideals for women. The reality, however, is much more complex. Even books that were written explicitly for women, e.g. Partridge's *The treasure of commodious conceits, and hidden secrets*, have a good deal of material focussed on men. These recipes could point to either that women were seen as the arbiters of standard masculinity or that authors thought that these recipes should be part of the standard repertoire needed in any household. Much of this literature was focused on men – particularly magic that assisted them in promoting their public lives, although, this may simply betray the more regularly male audience of the medieval Latin literature. Finally, the manuscripts contain a range of material which reflects all the patterns that we have seen (from cosmetics to beards), but additionally includes magic appealing to more explicitly prurient or otherwise disreputable interests (gambling, hunting, getting duty-free sex, etc.). In short, the manuscript books offer a more uncensored picture of sixteenth-century masculinity and are necessary to getting a balanced picture.

One of the primary concerns of books of secrets was the maintenance of health, and in sixteenth-century England, women often took the lead in making and administering household

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<sup>244</sup> Some books like *The Secrets of Alexis* have recipes that are specifically addressed to women in the title of the recipe. In general, many of the recipes looked at in this study don't specifically address either sex, though they do seem to deal with more typically feminine concerns.

medicine.<sup>245</sup> The male head of the household, however, was ultimately responsible for the health of their family, and many took an active interest in household medicine as well, some by creating their collections of vernacular recipes.<sup>246</sup> All but one of the printed books in this study are ambiguous about whether their intended audience was men or women.<sup>247</sup> The authors of these books of secrets suggest that men should take an active role in household medicine and provided recipes to overcome the anxiety caused by the illness of a family member. Since regulation of the household was not only male prerogative, but also a duty, fathers were also concerned with their ability to control the members of their household. Unsurprisingly, books of secrets thus reflect a concern with the sexuality of the female members of their household. Both manuscripts and printed books of secrets provide men with recipes that would give them a sense of control over female sexuality and the honour of their family name. Books of secrets also provided men at every stage of their lives with a way to overcome anxieties in their public life.

The private nature of manuscripts gave scribe the freedom to express concerns associated with more disreputable activities. An example of this would be love magic, something that was made illegal by the 1562 Act against Conjurations. A part of youthful masculinity was the ability to brag about sexual conquests with one's peers. For those that were unsure of their ability to attract members of the opposite sex, love potions provided a way to address this perceived inability. Love potions also served as a form of male fantasy in the scribe's construction of himself as a magician. Furthermore, many youths engaged in gambling at ale houses, and the

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<sup>245</sup> Stine, 33-4; Edith Snook, *Women, Beauty, and Power in Early Modern England: A Feminist History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 22.

<sup>246</sup> Louise Bishop, *Words, Stones, & Herbs: The Healing Word in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 144; Lisa Smith, "The Relative Duties of a Man: Domestic Medicine in England and France, ca. 1685-1740" *Journal of Family History* 31.3 (2006), 245.

<sup>247</sup> Lupton's book, *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*, being the only book of secrets in this study that is explicit about its intended audience.

charms and amulets in books of secrets that "guaranteed" winning at various forms of gambling provided men with a sense of power over chance and others.<sup>248</sup> Books of secrets contained recipes that addressed masculine concerns of acquiring patriarchal masculinity, however, manuscript books of secrets dealt with masculine concerns in a liminal space in society, addressing both socially-legitimate patriarchal concerns and the concerns of youth that went against social norms.

### **Printed books of secrets and reinforcing gender norms**

Books of secrets provided recipes that focussed on both men and women. The inclusion of a large number of medicinal recipes is evidence of the shift to household medicine in that genre. Physical appearance was viewed as representative of the condition of the person's soul. As such, recipes that helped to remove blemishes and improve complexion aided women in overcoming their concerns and reinforcing social norms. Many men in early modern England would have had a difficult time living up to society's standards of patriarchal masculinity.<sup>249</sup> Authors of books of secrets addressed these concerns and provided a way to potentially overcome any deficiencies by showing that the world could be easily manipulated by the right type of reader.<sup>250</sup> To achieve the societal marks of masculinity, some men might have turned to books of secrets for experiments that provided ways of overcoming any perceived shortcomings. Physical features, such as a beard, acted a signifier to others of a man's virility. An important aspect of the head of household's life was the ability to father children, which was an important

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<sup>248</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 201-202.

<sup>249</sup> Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2. Much of the discussion regarding male anxiety follows terms originating from the study of plays and puritan prescriptive literature.

<sup>250</sup> Kavey, 93.

characteristic of patriarchal masculinity. The demands public life also preoccupied the lives of many men, seeking to acquire patronage or just the interactions of day to day business could make men try anything to get ahead. Books of secrets provided readers with ways of manipulating the world around them to overcome their concerns, and they reinforced societal norms.

Medicinal recipes made up a large part of manuscript books of secrets, and in England, these household recipe collections were often seen as knowledge produced and shaped by women.<sup>251</sup> Compilers of printed books of secrets seem to have been aware of this as they included a large number of medicinal recipes in their books. Although, they differ from household books in that they were compiled and edited by men. John Partridge's book of secrets, *Treasurie of Commodius Conceits & Hidden Secrets*, was the first English book of secrets printed for women.<sup>252</sup> These recipes provided women with the ability to maintain their home, provide health care for their family, and engage in charitable works in the community. In the second introductory letter written by Partridge to his book, he stated that the female reader should regard the book, "to be her seruant retained, To serue her, faithfullie doing thy cure."<sup>253</sup> The rhetorical references to the book as a servant, differs from that of other books of secrets and firmly places this book within the domestic and feminine sphere of use. Furthermore, Richard Jones, in his letter that appears in the 1591 edition, also emphasized the domestic use of the book, "Good Huswiues here you haue a Iewell for your ioy, A Closet meet your Huswiferie to

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<sup>251</sup> Tessa Storey, "Face Waters, Oils, Love Magic and Poison: Making and Selling Secrets in Early Modern Rome" *Secrets and Knowledge in Medicine and Science: 1500-1800*, ed. Alisha Rankin and Elaine Leong (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 102; Sara Pennell, "Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England" *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. Victoria Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2004), 237.

<sup>252</sup> Kavey, 95; Stine, 93-94.

<sup>253</sup> Partridge, 1591, A3.v.

practise and imploy.”<sup>254</sup> Jones goes on to say that it is not just gentlewomen who can, and should, use the book but also “the Farmers wife, and Crafts-mans Huswife cooke.”<sup>255</sup> Similar to other books of secrets, *Treasurie* was intended for a people of various socio-economic standing. Partridge's letter to his book reveals how he thought the book should be used, “Let her use thy commodities, as right wel she may To profite her friends, for healths preservation And also to pleasure them for recreation.”<sup>256</sup> *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits* presented women with secrets of nature that would assist them in fulfilling their duties as housewives and concerns with maintaining an ordered household.<sup>257</sup>

Printed books of secrets also gave men a sense of control over their health and the health of their families. While women often took a leading role when it came to creating medicines for the household, this was more of a shared responsibility than the secondary sources suggest, as it was also part of the patriarch's duty. Ideally, patriarchs were responsible for the financial, emotional, and physical welfare of their households. The making and administering of domestic medicine could be included in the patriarch's duty to their household as it was simply part of caring for the welfare of the household.<sup>258</sup> This would necessitate men have access to personal recipe collections, and while they may not have made the medicine themselves, they may well have overseen the preparation and administration. Furthermore, some men did take an interest in the health and care of the members of the household, and would take charge in communicating with a physician to acquire aid for their family members.<sup>259</sup> This can be seen in the printed book, *Secrets of Alexis*:

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<sup>254</sup> Richard Jones, 1591, A1.v.

<sup>255</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> Partridge, 1591, A3.v.

<sup>257</sup> Kavey, 103.

<sup>258</sup> Smith, “The Relative Duties of a Man”, 237-238.

<sup>259</sup> *ibid.*, 244.

A meruelous secrete, whiche the greate lordes of the Moores dooe use, whereby they make that their children haue no heare vnder their armes, or other place where they wyll. And this secrete found I in Syria, the yeare 1521.by the meanes of a lord of the countrey, whose doughter I healed.<sup>260</sup>

This story reveals two things about the role of patriarch's role in providing care for their families: that patriarchs took an active role in their children's health and that men's collections of recipes could be more than just collections of curiosity or self-interest.<sup>261</sup>

Conduct writers in sixteenth-century England remarked that part of the household duties of the housewife was the making and administering of medicine, not only for maintaining the health of the household but also as a part of the charitable duties.<sup>262</sup> Books of secrets provided a source to which women could turn to fulfill their duty. The 1571 edition of *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits* contains four short recipes for different ailments, two of which are specifically female ailments: a gnawing in a woman's stomach and ague in a woman's breast.<sup>263</sup> Furthermore, it addresses other medical concerns in chapters on the virtues of various plant conserves, like roses and violets. While the 1591 edition does add a significant number of new medicinal recipes, many of them are short, simple, and deal with common ailments, similar to recipes that were being transmitted in manuscript recipe collections written by women.<sup>264</sup>

The 1591 edition of *Treasurie* also adds some notable recipes to help women conceive. The anxiety surrounding having children and ensuring a continuing family line did not affect just

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<sup>260</sup> Alexis of Piedmont, 78.

<sup>261</sup> Smith argues that seventeenth and eighteenth-century recipe collections, contrary to medical historians assumptions, show that men's lay medical knowledge was put into action. Smith, "Relative Duties", 245.

<sup>262</sup> Elaine Leong, "Making Medicines in the Early Modern Household" *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82.1 (2008), 147.

<sup>263</sup> *Treasurie* (1571), D.v, iiii. The gnawing in a woman's stomach does not appear in the index. The other two recipes are for the unnatural heat in the liver and a canker in the mouth.

<sup>264</sup> For more on household recipe books see Elaine Leong, "Making medicine in the Early Modern Household" *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82.1 (2008): 145-168; Sara Pennell, "Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England" in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium* edited by Victoria Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2004): 237-258.

men as women also expressed a desire for children. Chapters 66 through 68 address different aspects of the child bearing. The first experiment is used to determine whether or not a woman can conceive. If it turns out that the woman cannot conceive, the next recipe could potentially solve the problem, as the eating of cooked sea fish (*polipodes* in Latin) will help a barren woman conceive. The reader could also turn to chapter 70, a recipe for strengthening the seed of a man, however, there are no recipes in the book to determine whether the man is impotent. Lastly, the reader is given a recipe to have a quick, painless (or less painful) childbirth.<sup>265</sup> All the books of secrets in this study have numerous recipes concerned with curing both men and women of infertility, or helping to determine if the woman can conceive. Lupton's book contains several recipes to determine whether a woman can conceive, many of which use plants as a divinatory device.<sup>266</sup> *Secrets of Albertus* includes two herbs, Periwinkle and Polygonia, that improve a man's virility and fertility.<sup>267</sup> It also includes two recipes to help the woman conceive using natural magic, one involved the mixing powdered hart's horn and cow gall, and the other "giv[ing] the woman mare's milk unknown to her."<sup>268</sup> These recipes gave the reader, whether male or female, a way of responding to the anxiety of remaining childless, a concern that continues up to the present day.

The inclusion of food recipes in books of secrets was intended to contribute to the housewife's ability to maintain a healthy, ordered household. An individual's diet had an important part in preventative medicine in the Galenic system. Already in the fifteenth century, treatises on what foods to eat and when to eat them, circulated amongst the gentry and noble

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<sup>265</sup> Partridge, 1591, D2v.

<sup>266</sup> Lupton, 13.

<sup>267</sup> Albertus Magnus, A.v.v, B.iiii.r.

<sup>268</sup> *ibid.*, I.iiii.v, I.v.r.

families of Europe.<sup>269</sup> Thus, culinary ability was not only necessary to produce delectable meals, but also healthy ones. None of the culinary recipes in *Treasurie* suggest that the dish has any medicinal qualities or preventative attributes, and the use of a variety of spices seems to suggest that it would mostly have been used to make more delectable meals.<sup>270</sup> An astute housewife, however, would be able to combine the recipes found in *Treasurie* with knowledge of dietetics, which she was expected to know, to maintain the physical well-being of the members of her household.

Beautifying recipes helped women to maintain or improve their skin and hair, which were seen as a sign of inner virtue and character, or lack thereof. Early modern English society regarded unblemished white skin not only as a sign of health but also social and moral superiority. Likewise, too much or too little hair pointed to a humoral imbalance.<sup>271</sup> Recipes found in books of secrets, like Partridge's, responded to female concerns about their physical appearance. The 1591 edition of *Treasurie* has six recipes for face washes to remove pimples and colour. These recipes were simplistic and required few ingredients. The most complex recipe required a distillation of Allsi glass, plantain, purslaue, veriuike, and twenty eggs.<sup>272</sup> However, the others are relatively simplistic mixtures allowing for immediate application. This would give women the ability to create the face-wash as it was needed. *A Thousand Notable Things* contains six recipes for face washes to make the skin clean and fair. One such recipe is a drink made from Elder flowers and borage water that "will make [the drinker] seeme young a great while."<sup>273</sup> *Secrets of Alexis* also has several recipes for face washes. The fourth book of the first part is devoted almost entirely to face washes for women. Furthermore, both books have several

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<sup>269</sup> Mellyn, 306-309.

<sup>270</sup> Kavey, 116-117.

<sup>271</sup> Snook, 4, 37, 118.

<sup>272</sup> Partridge, 1591, D2.r.

<sup>273</sup> Lupton, 95.



medicinal recipes and recipes to aid women in childbirth. Such recipes would have given female readers ways of dealing with their concerns and fulfilling societal norms.

Beards represented an important aspect of masculinity and the ability to grow a beard signified one's virility and financial independence in the early modern period. Not only was it a physical marker that separated men from women, but also men from boys. Beards, also, set freemen apart from apprentices, and therefore, marked a man's economic status and independence.<sup>274</sup> Furthermore, beards were connected to a man's reproductive ability. Those that could not grow beards were seen as boyish men who could not produce heirs, and thus fail in one of their duties as a husband.<sup>275</sup> *The Secrets of Alexis* has six remedies for men that cannot grow beards or are bald.<sup>276</sup> One recipe that calls for olive oil to be mixed with wart-like growths from a donkey was apparently so powerful "that if a man annoynt or rubbe the iawes or chinne of a woman, she shall have the haire growe upon the same place."<sup>277</sup> *A Thousand Notable Things* also contains similar recipes for hair growth.<sup>278</sup> These various recipes for growing a beard show that both compilers of printed books recognized cultural importance of growing a beard. They provided recipes that sought to help men (either independently or through their wives) to fit into socially accepted models of masculinity.

Experiments in books of secrets also gave men a perceived control over their public life and ability to influence others. Those that sought means of acquiring the support of their superiors might turn to books of secrets, specifically *Secrets of Albertus*. This book has several recipes that provided the men with the ability to gain the favour of their superiors, overcome

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<sup>274</sup> Mark Johnston, "Bearded Women in Early Modern England" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 47.1 (2007), 1.

<sup>275</sup> Will Fisher, "The Renaissance Beard: Masculinity in Early Modern England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54.1 (Spring, 2001): 167-168, 174-178.

<sup>276</sup> *Alexis of Piedmont*, 2<sup>nd</sup> part, 39r; *Alexis of Piedmont*, 3<sup>rd</sup> part, 34r-34v.

<sup>277</sup> *Alexis of Piedmont*, 3<sup>rd</sup> part, 34v.

<sup>278</sup> Lupton, 94.

their adversaries, and grace themselves with eloquence. Nearly half of the forty-five entries in the chapter on the virtue of stones are for gaining favour and overcoming one's enemies. Carrying around agate "maketh a man mighty, pleasant, delectable, and helpeth against adversaries."<sup>279</sup> Likewise, beryl and opal could also be used to protect a man from his enemies.<sup>280</sup> Furthermore, to add a sense of wonder and credibility, the author included a couple of imaginary stones, taken from the belly of a swallow, or the head a live dragon, to the list of stones that will give a man power over his rivals.<sup>281</sup> Several plants and animals were also thought to give men success in their pursuit of power. The heart of a mole mixed with celandine empowered men to "overcome all his enemies, and all matters of suit, and shall put away all debate."<sup>282</sup> While, carrying a badger's right eye wrapped in wolf skin made a man pleasant and acceptable, and if it was made into a powder and served with meat, "the giver shall be greatly loved of him that receiveth it."<sup>283</sup> Amulets and other forms of natural magic in *Secrets of Albertus* offered men a sense of control over their public life, where being eloquent and overcoming one's opponents was an important aspect of daily life in acquiring favour and patronage.<sup>284</sup> Such recipes seemed to have declined in popularity in the sixteenth century as none of the other printed books in this study address these concerns. This makes it clear that publishers were leery of publishing things that might be seen as illegal, and demonstrates why it is important to look at manuscripts. As we shall see, no such editing seems to have occurred in the manuscripts.

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<sup>279</sup> Albertus Magnus, C.v.r.

<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*, C.vi.r, C.viii.v.

<sup>281</sup> *ibid.*, C.viii.v, D.v.v.

<sup>282</sup> *ibid.*, A.v.r.

<sup>283</sup> *ibid.*, E.ii.r-v.

<sup>284</sup> Shapin, 284-289.

The male head of household was responsible for the behaviour of their families and certain recipes in books of secrets gave these men a greater sense of control over their families. Their masculinity was connected to the control of the female members of his household, especially their sexuality and the ability to produce male heirs. It was through children, especially boys, that men were able to secure their legacy and the continuation of their family line. While this was a more dominant desire amongst the upper classes where the inheritance of land and property was more prominent, other socio-economic groups were also concerned with illegitimate children.<sup>285</sup> Furthermore, the father desired to know that the children his wife bore were not another man's.<sup>286</sup> Books of secrets and natural magic offered to assuage these fears and gain a sense of control over his family.

Divination experiments in books of secrets claimed to be able to tell the user whether a woman had been faithful or not. The fear of being cuckolded and having one's inheritance stolen was a fundamental part of masculinity in the early modern period. Female infidelity could lead to a breakdown of social order, interrupting the inheritance of property by the eldest legitimate son. Thus, part of the male head of household's identity as a man revolved around his relation to knowledge of his wife's sexuality, knowledge that could be difficult to obtain.<sup>287</sup> Books of secrets, although, presented the paterfamilias with a method of acquiring the truth of their wife's sexual activities, giving them mastery over that aspect of their lives and masculinity. A lodestone

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<sup>285</sup> Illegitimate children, especially those born to poor mother's, could be a burden on communities and magistrates as they would have to pay for the upkeep of the child. Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 179, 202.

<sup>286</sup> Alexandra Shepard, "From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500-1700," *Journal of British Studies* 44.2 (2005), 283; Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies, and Families in Early Modern England*. Women and Men in History (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2004), 114, 117, 130; Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster, "Childless Men in Early Modern England," in *The Family in Early Modern England*, ed. Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 165-169.

<sup>287</sup> Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity*, 131.

or a diamond placed under the head of the sleeping woman would magically force her to fall out of bed if she had been unfaithful.<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, her husband was also able to force his wife to love him alone by carrying around the marrow from the left foot of a wolf.<sup>289</sup> *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus* also has two more sinister experiments, which forced the woman to tell all her secrets. Both of the experiments required putting animal parts on the woman's chest while she was sleeping.<sup>290</sup> Thus, the person wishing to find out the woman's secrets would need close physical access, so the experiments would probably only have been intended for use upon family members. These experiments gave patriarchs that were concerned about their wife's sexuality, a sense of being able to control it.

Thus, as Kavey suggests, recipes in printed books of secrets gave readers a sense of being able to control nature so that they could overcome their concerns and maintain social norms. *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits* addressed feminine concerns of maintaining an ordered household. Medicinal and culinary recipes helped women preserve the health of their families and the local community. The desire and importance of having legitimate male children to inherit the family legacy caused anxiety for many families in sixteenth-century England. All books in this study provide readers a sense of being able to overcome this anxiety, containing recipes for improving the fertility of both men and women, and at times ensuring conception. Books of secrets also dealt with masculine concerns, both domestic and public. *Secrets of Albertus* contains recipes to make several different amulets that provide various ways of allegedly being able to influence others. Helping men in their efforts to acquire patronage and overcome their enemies. Men concerned about their physical appearance, and in particular the ability to grow a beard, and the cultural significance of one's physical appearance could turn to books of secrets

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<sup>288</sup> Albertus Magnus, C.i.r-v, I.iii.r.

<sup>289</sup> *ibid.*, I.i.r.

<sup>290</sup> *ibid.*, I.iii.v-I.iii.r.

for recipes that guaranteed hair growth. These books also gave men a greater sense of control over their households, supposedly, allowing men to determine whether their wives have been faithful. This ability would help men in acquiring and maintaining patriarchal masculinity.

### **Manuscript books of secrets and masculinity**

While secrets of nature found in manuscripts dealt with similar concerns as those found in printed books, they also dealt with concerns associated with disreputable activities. Compilers of manuscript books of secrets dealt, primarily, with issues that were important to them. Often the use of common magic focused on maintaining status quo, aiding people in their day-to-day struggles with well-being and gaining modest prosperity.<sup>291</sup> In part, experiments found in manuscripts helped men deal with living up to societies expectations. The inclusion of these experiments is similar to that of printed books of secrets, in that it helped men to overcome their fears of acquiring patriarchal masculinity. Along with the concerns about maintaining gender norms, the private nature of manuscripts allowed scribes to express their more personal fears and desires. The expression of these fears and desires often ran counter to social norms and rebelled against patriarchal masculinity. Both manuscripts in this study contain several love potions, often aimed at acquiring the love of a young woman. These erotic love potions were made illegal by the Witchcraft Acts of the sixteenth century, and express a desire to, potentially, disrupt social order by undercutting other fathers' attempts to control their daughter's sexuality. They reveal both positive and negative models of masculinity. On one hand, the need to make use of love potions suggests the image of a man who is unsure of his ability to attract women. On the other, men viewed sexual prowess as a positive trait of their masculinity, and the ability to use these

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<sup>291</sup> Bailey, *Magic and Superstition*, 81.

recipes create the image of a magician who has the skill to acquire what he desired: a kind of magical prowess. Gambling was another important aspect of youthful and transgressive masculinity. Those that feared to lose, or were already in a lot of debt, could turn to books of secrets for charms and amulets, like those found in *Of Love*, which promised the wearer success at dice and other forms of gambling.<sup>292</sup> The experiments in Ashmole 1378 and "Of Love, Kardes, Dice and Other Conceits" dealt with desires that occupied a liminal space between youth and manhood.

The scribe of Ashmole 1378 deals with various aspects of patriarchal masculinity similar to that can found in printed books of secrets. Heads of household in the early modern period were concerned with having legitimate children to carry on their family line. The high rate of infant mortality and the need for legitimately born males led some to use whatever means necessary to ensure that they had healthy children. Like printed books, the recipes found in Ashmole 1378 deal with both male and female infertility. There are four recipes for increasing a woman's fertility found throughout Ashmole 1378 all of which make use of different ingredients. The first two recipes for conception are found within entries for other cures. The first recipe is entitled "To help the matrix", and at the end of the recipe the scribe adds "also the comforting and cleansing of the matrix and helping of conception, is in the receiving of the fume beneath."<sup>293</sup> The next recipe is found in an entry for motherwort, which is presented in Galenic terms declaring that it is "hot and dry in the third degree."<sup>294</sup> This is followed by three different uses of motherwort that focus on the uterus, including aiding in conception. These two entries express the aiding of conception as a part of normal maintenance of women's health. The last two

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<sup>292</sup> For an example of someone who sought magical assistance with gambling see the case of Henry Neville. Rylie, *The Sorcerer's Tale*.

<sup>293</sup> Ashmole 1378, 5.

<sup>294</sup> *ibid.*, 11.

recipes for helping women conceive take a slightly different form than the previous two. The scribe, or a future owner of the manuscript, drew a manculus beside the first of two consecutive recipes to help a woman conceive. This mark reflects that someone thought this recipe was important and wished to be able to find it easily at a later date. It also points to an active use of the manuscript, in particular, this recipe to help with conception.

Conception could also be attained by more explicitly magical means. Ashmole 1378 contains only one recipe for conception that requires the making of an amulet or charm that the woman is supposed to carry with her: "take ye powder of a hartes horn & lett it be myxed w[i]t[h] a cowes gall, let a woman kepe it abowt hir & then lett her do the acte of generacion w[i]t[h] hir husband & she shall conceiue."<sup>295</sup> The next recipe for conception also makes use of magic. While seeming to be natural, requiring the women to drink mare's milk, however, it is supposed to be done without the women knowing, and she then has to have sex within the hour, to conceive.<sup>296</sup> The scribe is implicitly suggesting that if the woman knows that she is drinking mare's milk, it will not work and that the effects of the milk only last an hour. Such a recipe illustrates the need for someone close to the woman trying to conceive to know about this recipe, to give her the mare's milk without her knowledge, and her husband would be ideally situated for this. *Of Love* contains three recipes to help women conceive, one if the couple desires a boy, another if they want a girl, and the last does not indicate the sex of the baby. The first two recipes make use of amulets that the woman was supposed to wear while having sex with her husband. To have a boy, "Take the stones of a bore and drye them in a pottle close covred that no ayre com to it. Put it in some warm place", the woman then carries the stone with her.<sup>297</sup> The recipe for a

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<sup>295</sup> *ibid.*, 46.

<sup>296</sup> *ibid.*, 46.

<sup>297</sup> Sloane 3850, f.153v.

girl requires "the matrix of a harre and the chap of a harlyng".<sup>298</sup> The inclusion of these recipes shows that the scribe was concerned about the ability to have children and being able to select the sex of the child. Despite the majority of *Of Love* being focused on recipes that counter social norms, the scribe was still concerned about what were seen as socially normal masculine concerns.

The scribe also goes beyond the printed books of secrets in addressing ailments afflicting male genitalia. "If a man's yard be swollen or sore. Take betony and stamp it and temper it with white wine and dress his yard therewith and it shall be whole."<sup>299</sup> The scribe included four other recipes for dealing with sore genitalia.<sup>300</sup> Furthermore, two more recipes are included that deal with burnt or scalded privy members.<sup>301</sup> Aside from the general health benefits, it is important that reproductive organs were healthy to ensure that men were able to father children. Such recipes were also important for men as illness or burns could lead to sexual impotence. Sexual inadequacy was seen as one of the main causes of cuckolding and a lack of sexual potency could lead to exclusion from the world of male relationships.<sup>302</sup> These recipes show the different lengths that families in sixteenth-century England would go to to overcome the anxiety of having children, from natural remedies that fit within the more academic language of medicine to magical amulets.

Astrologer-physicians frequently asked and answered questions about whether women were pregnant and the sex of the child or were virgins.<sup>303</sup> A women's virtue was the most important aspect in choosing a wife. Non-virgins could not be claimed as the exclusive property

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<sup>298</sup> *ibid.*, f. 154r.

<sup>299</sup> Ashmole 1378, 22.

<sup>300</sup> *ibid.*, 27, 35, 36.

<sup>301</sup> *ibid.*, 35.

<sup>302</sup> Elizabeth Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex, and Marriage* (New York: London, 1999), 67-69, 127.

<sup>303</sup> Kassell, *Medicine and Magic*, 221.



of their husbands. Plays and legal cases show that men believed women to be capable of deceiving them in regards to their virginity on their wedding night. As such, there was a great deal of public interest in being able to test a woman's virginity, and such tests were featured in plays by Middleton and Rawley.<sup>304</sup> Husbands sought to control their wives' sexuality to ensure that their children were legitimate heirs, that their inheritance would not be stolen by some other man's children, and that they were not made into cuckolds. A male head of household's identity was tied to their ability control the chastity of the female members of their household, knowledge of which they are never able to master.<sup>305</sup> Their claims to household authority could be questioned and their standing in the community could be reduced if their wife's adultery became public knowledge.<sup>306</sup> Furthermore, fathers were held responsible for the sexuality of their daughters, who were seen as the exclusive property of their fathers.<sup>307</sup> Both Ashmole 1378 and *Of Love* contain recipes for forcing a woman to love only her husband and ways of determining the whether or not a woman is a virgin.<sup>308</sup> These recipes addressed the fear of being a cuckold and gave the husband a sense of being able to control their wife's sexuality.

Ashmole 1378 and *Of Love* went beyond the printed sources in their views of dominating women by including erotic love potions and charms. Love magic made up roughly 12% of all the recipes in Ashmole 1378 and just over half of *Of Love*. The pursuit of love was a common goal of natural magic in the middle ages.<sup>309</sup> The majority of the erotic love magic in Ashmole 1378

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<sup>304</sup> Foyster, *Manhood*, 46-48.

<sup>305</sup> Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity*, 131.

<sup>306</sup> Foyster, *Manhood*, 66.

<sup>307</sup> *ibid.*, 91.

<sup>308</sup> For example, "To cause a woman to louve hir husband & forsake all other mene...take ye left foote of a wolfe be hynde & take owt the marrow of it & bare it a bouthe the & she shall not for sake the." Ashmole 1378, 47.

<sup>309</sup> Richard Keickhefer, "Erotic Magic in Medieval Europe" in *Sex in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays*, ed. Joyce E. Salisbury (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991), 30, 36-39; Mitchell, "Cultural Uses of Magic", 143-144, 151. These two manuscripts do have some connection with

took on the form divine names and nonsense words written on apples or cheese and given to the girl that one desires. For example, one recipe says to write "flemo, bramo, tetragramaton, and your name and her name" before giving it to her to eat.<sup>310</sup> One recipe appears in both manuscripts, which shows a common tradition connecting these two manuscripts. This recipe calls for raven's brains to be mixed with wheat or barley, baked into a loaf of bread and given to the woman.<sup>311</sup> Some recipes made use of various powders and scents, such as the powder of a black toad or suffumigations made from adder's skin, that would magically attract women, inflaming them "with the fyry dartes of venus love."<sup>312</sup> These secrets show that books of secrets were also used as a way of constructing a youthful or transgressive masculinity.

The private nature of manuscripts allowed these scribes to express their secret desires, which reveal men who sought to control women for their sexual pleasure. Throughout the middle ages, secular and ecclesiastical authorities condemned the use of love magic because it disrupted social order.<sup>313</sup> Although, for the young men who frequented alehouses, sexual prowess was a positive aspect of their expression of masculinity.<sup>314</sup> Their peers judged their sexual prowess in how sexually attractive and skilled they were at seducing women that they did not have to use force.<sup>315</sup> Young men sought to show off their newly acquired manhood to their peers. Unmarried men boasted to their peers about their sexual experience, deeming it important enough to

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necromancy performed by the clerical underground in aspects of wish fulfillment and having sex with women. Especially, Sloane 3850 which two rituals for summon female spirits, that the magician has sex with, in order to obtain a ring of invisibility. For more on the clerical underground see: Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Frank Klaassen, "Learning and Masculinity in Manuscripts of Ritual Magic of the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 38.1 (2007).

<sup>310</sup> Ashmole 1378, 69.

<sup>311</sup> Ashmole 1378, 66; Sloane 3850, f. 148r.

<sup>312</sup> Sloane 3850, 148v, 152v.

<sup>313</sup> Kieckhefer, "Erotic Magic", 30-33.

<sup>314</sup> Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, 210-212; Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), 98.

<sup>315</sup> Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 10.

convince their peers that some claims may have had no foundation in reality.<sup>316</sup> As such, these recipes could have been used as a construction of male fantasy. In some manuscripts of ritual magic, the scribe would construct a brag that would present the magician as a pinnacle of manliness, and not someone who relied on spells as a way to overcome a weakness.<sup>317</sup> In a similar way, love magic in these books of secrets could be part of the scribe's construction of himself as a magician who, unlike his peers, had the skill to manipulate nature to get what he desired.

Men had to be careful, however, of where they made such boasts, as apprentices were required to remain celibate and if their boasts became public knowledge, their reputation could be tarnished. Thus, all-male settings remained important for young men to express their masculinity.<sup>318</sup> Arguably manuscripts formed a similar kind of location if they were (as it often appears) intended only for other men. Furthermore, in 1541, Henry VIII put into the law the Witchcraft Act, which amongst other things banned love magic because it denied free will.<sup>319</sup> Both common folk and the nobility used love magic and it was standard fare of cunning-folk.<sup>320</sup> Manuscript books of secrets continued to contain love magic, even after these legal restrictions. These men used natural magic to assert their manhood in an anti-social manner. Men usually had more freedom when it came to breaking social norms than women. As, men's anti-patriarchal behaviour was not necessarily seen as threatening to social order, but rather as sport and often older men minimized and excused these transgressions as youthful excursions.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> *ibid.*, 40-42; Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 121.

<sup>317</sup> Klaassen, "Learning and Masculinity", 64-66.

<sup>318</sup> Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 44.

<sup>319</sup> Davies, *Popular Magic*, 4-9.

<sup>320</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, 278.

<sup>321</sup> Shepard, "From Anxious Patriarchs", 293.

While games, such as dice and cards, were not solely played by young people, sixteenth-century moralists often saw games, and institutions like alehouses where they played, as the ruin of men and identified young men as primary patrons of such institutions and games. Certainly, a lack of maturity was their hallmark. The community of the alehouses and the lure of gambling often created problems with religious and secular authorities, yet alehouses were an important part of social life of men and their expression of youthful or transgressive masculinity.<sup>322</sup> The scribe of *Of Love* includes several recipes to make charms and amulets that will ensure that the wearer wins at dice or tables. These charms often made use of divine names written on varying material with different types of ink. One such charm should serve as an example: “Take the longyste fethre in a swallowes wynges and with the blod of a bate wryght the names or wordes that folowe: dasarsen, Clabravite, inpick. And no man shall wyn of the.”<sup>323</sup> The manuscript could also have been used by a magician making these charms for some young gentleman, either as a scam or in earnest. One such example of a magician using the secrets of making charms and amulets to defraud a young gentleman of his money can be found in the account of Menville, Wisdom, and Lord Henry Neville.<sup>324</sup> Many young men, like Lord Henry, while waiting to inherit their landed titles, racked up debts gambling.<sup>325</sup> Such recipes, therefore, express a construction of youthful or transgressive masculinity, one that not only saw participation in these activities as a positive but also desired to overcome their competition by any means necessary.

The scribes of both Ashmole 1378 and *Of Love* present a construction of liminal masculinity, between youthful, transgressive and patriarchal masculinity. In Ashmole 1378, the scribe focuses heavily on medicinal recipes. These recipes gave men a sense of control over their

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<sup>322</sup> Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, 201-203.

<sup>323</sup> Sloane 3850, 155r.

<sup>324</sup> Ryrie, 8-15.

<sup>325</sup> Ryrie, 8.

world and helped them fulfill their patriarchal duties of protecting the health of their households. Both manuscripts provided secrets for controlling the sexuality of female family members, especially one's wife. Along with recipes to cure infertility, these recipes show men's concern of having legitimate children, an important aspect of patriarchal masculinity. However, these manuscripts also included elements of youthful or transgressive masculinity. Love potions make up a major part of *Of Love* and several are included in Ashmole 1378. They reveal a man who was unsure of his ability to attract members of the opposite sex. Yet, in young male codes of masculinity, sexual prowess was viewed as a positive, and the inclusion of recipes could be the scribe's construction of male fantasy and himself as a magician who had the skill to acquire what he wanted. These books of secrets also addressed the desire to succeed at gambling, an important aspect of youthful and transgressive masculinity.

### **Conclusion**

Print and manuscript books of secrets both provide readers with recipes whose goals helped to fulfill social norms. However, manuscripts versions include goals that went against social norms and expressed a youthful masculinity. Compilers of printed books created books that could be used by both men and women. The recipes in these books addressed various gendered anxieties. Women, particularly noble women, were responsible for providing health care for their families and the local community. The medicinal recipes found in printed books of secrets would have given them a source to acquire the knowledge necessary to overcome their anxiety. Face washes and hair dyes addressed concerns about physical appearance, which was connected with spiritual health. Medicinal recipes also dealt with the concerns patriarchal masculinity and responsibility of the paterfamilias to care for the welfare of his family. Men's

physical appearance, in particular, the ability to grow a beard, was closely tied to masculinity. Recipes in books of secrets claimed to treat baldness, giving men a way to live up to society's standards. The masculinity of a pater familias was linked to their ability to control the sexuality of the female members of their household. Men worried about being able to control the members of their household could turn to books of secrets which gave men a sense of control over their family members. *Secrets of Albertus* provided men with a sense of being able to succeed in public life, with recipes that, supposedly, allowed to user to gain influence and overcome their adversaries.

Both Ashmole 1378 and *Of Love* deal with various patriarchal masculine anxieties, similar to those found in printed books of secrets. Recipes dealing with common ailments help heads of household fulfill their obligations to their families. Furthermore, both manuscripts contain recipes that gave them a sense of control over the sexuality of the female members of their household. Recipes to increase the fertility of both men and women, as well as a couple to help select the sex of the baby, provided a way to deal with the anxiety of having legitimate children to inherit family property. These manuscript books of secrets, however, also provided several love potions. A part of youthful masculinity was the ability to brag about sexual conquests with one's peers and for those that were unsure of their ability to attract members of the opposite sex, love potions provided a way to address their concern. Charms and amulets that "guaranteed" winning at various forms of gambling provided a way to deal with the fear of losing. The masculinity that manuscript books of secrets promoted was a mixture of patriarchal and youthful masculinity.

## CONCLUSION

While the spread of the printing press to England did impact the availability of books of secrets and consequentially how many people had access to these secrets, it did not fundamentally alter the content of books of secrets at least in England. Eamon's argues that the printing press popularized secrets and acted as mediator between elite and popular cultures.<sup>326</sup> While the printing press did increase the spread of books of secrets, the vernacularization of books of secrets was underway before the printing press was invented. One of the most popular books of secrets in the middle ages, *The Secrets of Albertus Magnus*, was also one of the most popular printed books of secrets in England, showing a continuation of the medieval tradition. As well, the two popular English books of secrets in this study (*Thousand Notable Things of Sundrie Sorts* and *Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*) mined the writings of ancient and medieval natural philosophers, such as Albertus Magnus and Pliny, for material. Furthermore, they often cited these authors as the source of their material drawing a deliberate connection to the medieval tradition.

English authors of books of secrets differed from their continental counterparts in how they constructed their authority and presented themselves and their books. Eamon presents a picture of authors of books of secrets in *Secrets and the Science of Nature*, but he bases his description mostly upon Italian and German sources. He argues that authors of books of secrets presented themselves as experimenters, who sought to establish their authority as being based on personal experience.<sup>327</sup> English authors took a different approach to establishing their authority and the authority of their works. They acted like expert mediators who constructed authority based on their learned knowledge rather than practical experience. Rather than presenting their

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<sup>326</sup> Eamon, 94-6, 104-105.

<sup>327</sup> Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, 137-9.

works as collections derived from years of work in a laboratory like the Italian and German writers did, English writers depicted their books as a collection of secrets derived from both old and new sources. The authority of their works based on both the received authority of ancient and medieval writers and the author's supposed expertise in the matter. In general, this shows the distinctive nature of the British environment and the importance of comparative history.

To get a complete picture of the culture of books of secrets in sixteenth-century England, it is important to examine manuscript books of secrets as well. Since the production of manuscripts for both public and personal reasons persisted long after the spread of the printing press, it is important for historians of the sixteenth century to look at manuscripts along with printed books to get a better understanding of culture in the sixteenth century. Manuscripts give historians insight into the lives of people that is not available in printed books. Looking at the culture of secrets in the sixteenth century, printed books show how authors and publishers packaged secrets for sale and give insight into how popularization changed secrets. Manuscripts may have been self-consciously prepared for readers, but did not have to limit their content because it was illicit or improper. They also provide a much broader body of evidence to examine. As a result, they crucial evidence for a full picture of many aspects of sixteenth-century culture. Both Eamon and Kavey's works focus heavily on printed books of secrets.<sup>328</sup> The two traditions were similar in the ways in which they combined knowledge from high and low cultures. Eamon argues that printed books of secrets made technical knowledge, which had previously been limited to the educated elite, accessible for a greater portion of the population.<sup>329</sup> By contrast, manuscript books of secrets combined high and low cultures of magic, combining the charms and necromancy of high magic with the natural magic of cunning-folk.

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<sup>328</sup> Eamon does discuss manuscript books of secrets prior to the invention of the printing press but focuses heavily on printed books after its invention.

<sup>329</sup> Eamon, *Science and Secrets of Nature*, 112-3.



Print and manuscript books of secrets had different inflections of masculine ideals, which is one way that manuscripts show a different part of the culture of secrets not found in printed books. In her book, *Books of Secrets*, Kavey argues that Gervase Markham's book of secret sought to help gentlemen fulfill their social obligations in breeding and training high-quality horses, and thus helping them acquire society's masculine ideal.<sup>330</sup> Kavey's study on masculinity and books of secrets is, however, limited to just Markham's book. By examining other sixteenth-century English printed books of secrets, one can get a more complete picture of the masculine ideals that authors sought to promote. Authors of printed books of secrets included recipes in their books that were aimed at helping men to achieve a form of masculinity that was in line with social expectations. Manuscript books of secrets presented a more fluid inflection of masculine ideals. They included recipes that could also be found in printed books. Recipes that gave the male reader a sense of control over their world and ability to fulfill masculine ideals of a pater familias. However, manuscript books of secrets also included recipes that fit into a youthful masculine ideal. These recipes focused on free sex, gambling success, and invisibility. Other aspects of the culture of secrets may be revealed by looking at manuscripts, such as the way in which they reflect the changing conceptions of the natural world, science, and medicine.

In sixteenth-century England, manuscript and printed books of secrets did share some common elements. Both relied on the authority of ancient and medieval natural philosophers to create and continued to reference those philosophers even after the spread of the printing press and the change this aided in continental books of secrets.<sup>331</sup> As well, recipes in both print and manuscript books of secrets presented a construction of masculinity that aligned with social norms. Manuscript books of secrets, however, included recipes that went against social norms.

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<sup>330</sup> Kavey, 131-3.

<sup>331</sup> Eamon, *Science and Secrets of Nature*, 94-6, 161-7.

Recipes to acquire duty-free sex, for guaranteed success at gambling, and invisibility fit the model of youthful masculinity. This demonstrates the continuing importance of manuscripts as evidence in cultural or social histories well into the age of print.

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